

INTELLIGENCE in the CIVIL WAR



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Introduction

Though much has been written about the Civil War itself, little has been written about the spy war that went on within.

The chronicling of Civil War intelligence activities challenges historians because of the lack of records, the lack of access to records, and the questionable truth of other records. Judah P. Benjamin, the Confederacy's Secretary of State, burned all the intelligence records he could find as federal troops entered Richmond. Union intelligence records were kept sealed in the National Archives until 1953. A few individuals involved in intelligence gathering burned their personal papers while others chose to publish their memoirs, though greatly embellishing their exploits. Even today, the identities of many spies remain secret. Henry Thomas Harrison, for example, was a Confederate spy whose intelligence set in motion the events that produced the battle of Gettysburg. But neither his first name nor details of his long career as a spy were known until 1986, when historian James O. Hall published an article about him.

Though the idea of centralized intelligence gathering was decades away, the age-old resistance to the idea was present even then. Neither side saw the need to create such intelligence organizations, but each side approached the idea of effectively acquiring intelligence in their own way. The Confederacy's Signal Corps, devoted primarily to communications and intercepts, included a covert agency, the Secret Service Bureau. This unit ran espionage and counter-espionage operations in the North. Late in the war, the bureau set up a secret headquarters in Canada and sent out operatives on covert missions in Northern states. The Union's Bureau of Military Information, unlike the Confederacy's Secret Service Bureau, operated for specific generals rather than for the Union Army itself. But here was born the idea of what would eventually become a centralized military intelligence division.

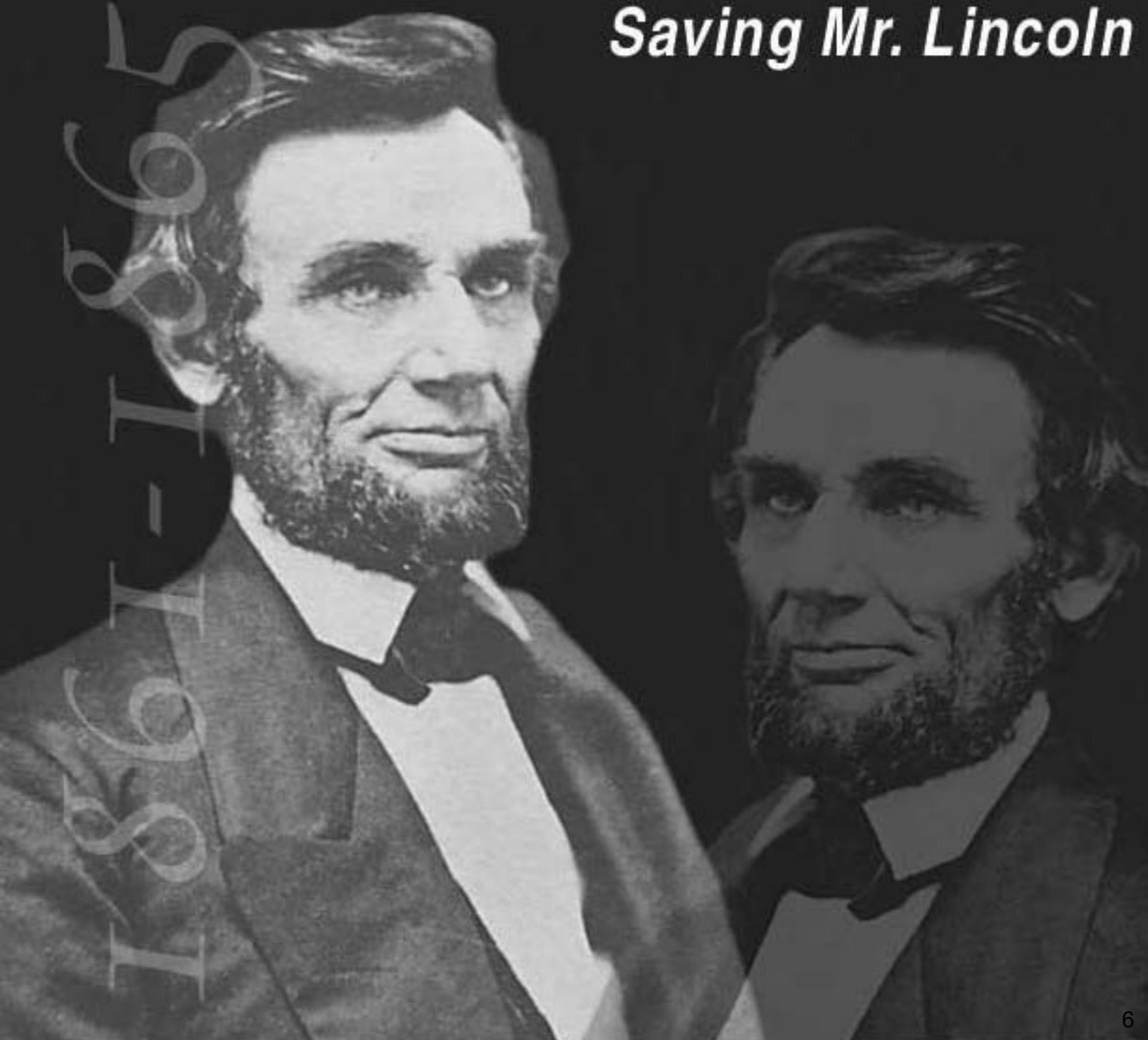
Each side still used age-old intelligence techniques, such as code-breaking, deception, and covert surveillance. However, into this modern war came two innovations that would endure as tools of espionage: wire-tapping and overhead reconnaissance.

What follows is a look at some of the highlights of how the North and the South gathered and used their information, the important missions, and the personalities. From this special view, the focus is not on the battlefield, but on a battle of wits.

The Civil War

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Saving Mr. Lincoln



Saving Mr. Lincoln

On February 11, 1861, Abraham Lincoln said his farewell to the people of his hometown of Springfield, Illinois, and boarded a train that would take him to Washington for his inauguration on March 4. As he started out, rumors of assassination plots circulated in several cities along the planned route. In Washington, stories spread that assassins would strike down Lincoln before or during his inauguration.

The South Carolina legislature had responded to Lincoln's election by unanimously voting to secede from the Union, leading the march of Southern states toward secession. "Civil war," said an Ohio newspaper, "is as certain to follow secession as darkness to follow the going down of the sun." The Union was tearing apart—and so, it seemed, was the nation's capital itself.

Rumors of plots swirled around the city. Secessionist congressmen were said to be planning to kidnap lame-duck President James Buchanan so that Vice President (and future Confederate general) John C. Breckinridge, who had run against Lincoln as a pro-slavery candidate, could seize power. "Minutemen" from Virginia and Maryland were reportedly ready to invade the city.

Charles Pomeroy Stone, a West Point graduate who had served in the Mexican War, was in Washington when the secessions began. Concerned about the rumors, he called upon his old commander, now Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Army. Scott made Stone a colonel and named him inspector-general of the District of Columbia militia.

Most of the U.S. Army was in Indian country, far beyond the reach of railroads. Washington's potential defenders included volunteer units of dubious loyalty. These included the National Rifles, whose captain said his men stood ready to "guard the frontier of Maryland and help to keep the Yankees from coming down to coerce the South."

Like many other Army officers of the time, Stone had to grope for military intelligence, using whatever resources he managed to find. There was no formal military intel-

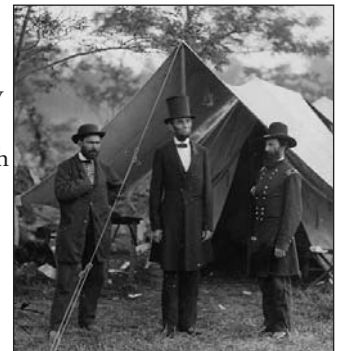
ligence organization, and counterintelligence was an unknown art. Stone realized that he needed help from civilians with special skills: detectives.

The U.S. government, lacking any federal investigative agency, often used private detectives to track down counterfeiters and mail thieves. Suspecting that the National Rifles harbored secessionists, Stone planted a detective in the ranks and told him to keep the unit's captain under surveillance.

Stone's detective told him that the men of the National Rifles were planning to storm the Treasury building as part of a plot to take over Washington. Stone also learned that more than 300 other men, known as "National Volunteers," were drilling in a hall above a large livery stable. Stone gave the task of penetrating that group to a "skillful New York detective" who had been loaned to the Army.

Through the detective's undercover work, Stone was able to learn enough to force the disbanding of the National Volunteers. Their captain, Dr. Cornelius Boyle, a prominent Washington physician, left the capital and later became a Confederate intelligence officer. Stone's counterintelligence efforts also purged the National Rifles of secessionists. The unit became one of 30 companies formed by Washingtonians loyal to the Union and ready to defend both the capital and Lincoln.

Soon after Lincoln's train left Springfield, Stone began receiving reports of assassination plots. "So many clear indications pointed to Baltimore that three good detectives of the New York police force were constantly employed there," Stone recalled. In a classic example of intelligence analysis, he compared the detectives' reports to "the information received from independent sources." Stone did not mention another detective—Allan Pinkerton, founder of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency.



Major Allan Pinkerton, President Abraham Lincoln, and Gen. John A. McClernand at Antietam, MD, October 1862

Samuel Morse Felton, president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad, had hired Pinkerton after hearing reports that rabid secessionists in Baltimore were planning to cut Baltimore off from Washington by burning bridges and sinking the Susquehanna River train ferry. Pinkerton went to Baltimore with five operatives, including a trusted assistant, Kate Warne, described by Pinkerton as America's first woman detective. Pinkerton set up an office and posed as a stockbroker named John H. Hutchinson.

While investigating the sabotage rumors, Pinkerton heard of a plot to kill Lincoln in Baltimore when his train arrived from Harrisburg on February 23. Lincoln was to be taken by carriage to a private home for lunch and then returned to the train. While secessionists—the National Volunteers were mentioned—whipped up a riot, a barber who called himself Captain Ferrandini would kill Lincoln, vanish into the mob, and slip away to the South. Baltimore police would have only a small force at the scene, under orders from the mayor and chief of police, both Southern sympathizers.

Pinkerton hoped to foil the plot by getting Lincoln to change his schedule. On February 21, he met with Lincoln in a Chicago hotel room. Lincoln said he could not believe there was a conspiracy to kill him. Hours later, Frederick Seward, son of Senator William Henry Seward, arrived at Lincoln's room and warned him of the plot, which had been discovered independently by detectives working for Colonel Stone and General Scott. They had sent young Seward to Lincoln, who now was convinced.

Next morning, Lincoln left by train for Harrisburg, as scheduled, then boarded a special train, accompanied by his bodyguard Ward H. Lamon, a burly former law partner. When the train pulled into West Philadelphia, Pinkerton was waiting in a carriage. The telegraph to Baltimore was cut off. Agents were placed in telegraph offices in Harrisburg, Philadelphia, and New York City, where there was a special watch to hold up any messages about Lincoln's travels. The carriage took Lincoln and Lamon to the yard of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad. There, Kate Warne met the carriage with four tickets for sleeping berths. She and Pinkerton, like Lamon, were armed.

The train pulled out shortly before 11 p.m. and arrived in Baltimore about 3:30 a.m. on February 23. Warne remained in Baltimore as the sleeping cars with Lincoln on board were shifted to another train, which arrived in Washington around 6 a.m. Later, Lincoln would say he regretted slipping into the capital "like a thief in the night."

On March 4, the morning of the inauguration, Stone stationed riflemen in windows overlooking the broad steps where Lincoln would take the oath of office. Sharpshooters stood on roofs along the inaugural route to the Capitol as Lincoln rode past in an open carriage. Soldiers lined the streets. Under the platform where Lincoln stood, other soldiers huddled, guarding against bomb planters. Other troops formed a cordon at the foot of the steps. After Lincoln's inauguration, Stone continued to protect the capital, taking control of telegraph offices and the railroad station, and seizing boats on the Potomac to keep Confederate agents from using them.

On April 12, Confederate cannons in Charleston began firing on Fort Sumter. The Civil War had begun.



Fort Sumter

Nine days later, Pinkerton wrote to President Lincoln, offering to start "obtaining information on the movements of the traitors, or safely conveying your letters or dispatches." Before Lincoln responded, Major General George B. McClellan asked Pinkerton to set up a military intelligence service for McClellan's command, the Army's Division of the Ohio. A former



Gen. George McClellan

railroad executive, McClellan was Pinkerton's friend and former client. Pinkerton agreed and, with several operatives, headed for McClellan's headquarters in Cincinnati. Like the detectives who had worked for Colonel Stone, Pinkerton would be a civilian, but he assumed a military cover name, Major E. J. Allen.

The Eye That Never Sleeps



Major Allan Pinkerton (right, seated) with his officers

Allan Pinkerton, born in 1819 in Glasgow, Scotland, was the son of a police sergeant. At the age of 23, he emigrated to the United States. After working for a time as a cooper, he became first a deputy sheriff in Illinois and then a member of Chicago's newly organized police force.

In 1850, he left the force as a detective and founded the Pinkerton National Detective Agency. Pinkerton's code called for his agents to have no "addiction to drink, smoking, card playing, low dives or ... slang." On the front of his Chicago headquarters, he placed a sign with a huge eye bearing the company slogan—"We Never Sleep." That Pinkerton logo was probably the origin of the term "private eye."

Pinkerton's detectives specialized in tracking and capturing gangs that robbed railroads. Through his work, Pinkerton met George B. McClellan, president of the Rock Island and Illinois Central Railroad, and its attorney, Abraham Lincoln. Those connections led to his work during the Civil War.

After the war, Pinkerton returned to Chicago and basked in the publicity earned by Pinkerton detectives as they pursued such notorious bandits as the James brothers and Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. "Pinkertons," as they were called, also worked as strikebreakers for the executives of companies battling unions that were organizing rail workers and coal miners.

Pinkerton died in 1884 and was buried in a family plot whose graves included that of Timothy Webster, one of his best agents who was hanged by the Confederates. Pinkerton had recovered Webster's remains after the war.

The Pinkerton National Detective Agency continued as a family enterprise through four generations. Outsiders bought it and kept the Pinkerton name. In 1999, Securitas, an international security firm, acquired the Pinkerton company.

Intelligence Collection–The South



Edmond Goode Flag



Flag of the 21st North Carolina Infantry



Flag of the 5th South Carolina Infantry, Co. G, "Catawba Light Infantry," Reverse



Flag of the 4th Virginia Infantry



Jefferson Davis' Memorial Service flag,



*Flag images courtesy of
The Museum of the Confederacy,
Richmond, Virginia*

Intelligence Collection—The South

For Confederates planning espionage against the North, Washington looked like an ideal site: a city 60 miles south of the Mason-Dixon Line, adjacent to slave-holding states, and full of Southern sympathizers. Many of them were in Congress or in the federal bureaucracy, and had access to valuable intelligence. All recruiters had to do was find among them the men and women who would have the courage and the skill to act as reliable agents.

The earliest known recruiter was Governor John Letcher of Virginia, who laid the foundation for Confederate espionage work in Washington. Virginia seceded from the Union on April 17, 1861, but did not join the Confederacy until May. During the interval, Letcher saw his state as an independent foe of the Union and began his own defense by forming an army and setting up a spy net in his foe's capital. He knew Washington well: as a member of Congress from 1853 to 1859 and he had been active in the city's social life.

One of the best-known members of that society was Rose O'Neal Greenhow, a vivacious 44-year-old widow, who partied and dined with Washington's elite. Openly pro-South, she had wept in the Senate Gallery on January 21, 1861, when Jefferson Davis, one of her many influential friends, said farewell to the Senate and went off to lead the Confederacy.

Letcher got his spy nest started by telling Thomas Jordan, a Virginia-born West Point graduate, to recruit Greenhow. Jordan, who had served in the Seminole Indian War and the Mexican War, was stationed in Washington. Sometime in the spring of 1861, while still a U.S. Army officer, he called on Greenhow and asked her to be an agent. (He soon left Washington and became a lieutenant colonel in the Virginia Provisional Army.)

Greenhow accepted the mission enthusiastically, using her knowledge of Washington's ways to get intelligence useful for the South. Major William E. Doster, the provost marshal who provided security for Washington, later called her "formidable," an agent with "masterly

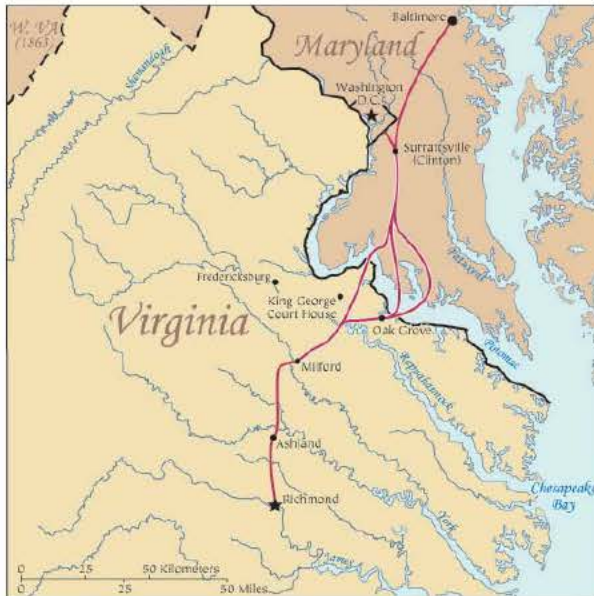
skill," who bestowed on the Confederacy "her knowledge of all the forces which reigned at the Capitol."

Greenhow's support of secessionists did not turn away her anti-slavery admirers, who included Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs (and future vice president to President Ulysses S. Grant). Wilson was identified as the author of love letters signed H; one letter said that "spies are put upon me but I will try to elude them tonight and once more have a happy hour in spite of fate." Another gentleman caller was a member of Wilson's committee, Senator Joseph Lane of Oregon, who signed his importuning letters to her. Another friend, Colonel Erasmus D. Keyes, General Winfield Scott's military secretary, later said that she had "tried to persuade me not to take part in the war."

Jordan instructed Greenhow in a simple, 26-symbol cipher and told her to use his cover name, Thomas John Rayford, for sending him reports. In her memoir about her espionage, she said that she sometimes used a word code. As an example, she told of a letter that said, "Tell Aunt Sally that I have some old shoes for the children, and I wish her to send one down town to take them, and to let me know whether she has found any charitable person to help her take care of them." What the letter actually meant was: "I have some important information to send across the river, and wish a messenger immediately. Have you any means of getting reliable information?"

The delivery of the ciphered reports to Jordan involved an ever-changing "Secret Line," the name for the system used to get letters, intelligence reports, and other documents across the Potomac and Rappahannock Rivers and into the hands of Confederate officers and officials. For Greenhow, the Secret Line began with a courier to whom she would entrust her reports. He or she would then hand these off to the next link in the chain of men and women who slipped in and out of taverns, farms, and waterfront docks along routes that connected Baltimore and Washington to the Confederacy.

One of Greenhow's reports, she later said, had helped the South win the first major battle of the war at Bull Run Creek on the road to Manassas, Virginia, on July 21, 1861.



The Confederate "Secret Line."

Modern historians discount her role, attributing the Confederate victory to tactics and errors that produced a Union rout. But P.G.T. Beauregard, the victorious general, gallantly gave her credit for alerting him to the size of the federal force advancing toward Manassas. He said that an enciphered report from her had been delivered to a Confederate picket outpost and quickly passed on to him and on to Jefferson Davis—with an added request for reinforcements.

The carrier of the report was Betty Duvall, a young friend of Greenhow. Duvall, dressed in a farm woman's clothes and driving a cart, passed through the Union sentinels on the Chain Bridge across the Potomac in Washington, and stopped at a Virginia safe house, where she mounted a horse and rode to the outpost, near Fairfax County Courthouse. She told the officer in charge that she had an urgent message for Beauregard. "Upon my announcing that I would have it faithfully forwarded at once," the officer later said, "she took out her tucking comb and let fall the longest and most beautiful roll of hair I have ever seen. She took then from the back of her head, where it had been safely tied, a small package, not larger than a silver dollar, sewed up in silk." Within was the message for Beauregard.

On the advance toward Manassas, the Union troops had overrun the Fairfax outpost and found papers and maps that incriminated Greenhow. Her grand home, not far from the White House, was put under surveillance by Allan Pinkerton, who had been placed in command of the Union Army's Division of the Potomac after the debacle at Bull Run. "I secured a house in Washington," Pinkerton later wrote, "and gathered around me a number of resolute, trustworthy men and discreet women."

Pinkerton's first major assignment was the capture of Rose Greenhow. One rainy night, wanting to peek into her parlor, he went to a high window, removed his boots, and stood on the shoulders of two operatives, "prepared to take notes of what transpired." A man had entered—and Pinkerton recognized him as an officer assigned to the provost marshal's office.

"Just at that moment I again received a warning from my supporters, and hastily jumping to the ground, we hid ourselves until the pedestrians had passed out of sight and hearing." He climbed back on the men's shoulders and saw the officer show Greenhow a map. The two left the room for more than an hour, returned "arm in arm," and, with "a whispered good-night and something that sounded very much like a kiss," the officer left.

Pinkerton followed the officer to a building he did not recognize. Suddenly, four soldiers with fixed bayonets grabbed Pinkerton—and arrested him on the officer's order. Pinkerton was soon released and the captain



Rose O'Neal Greenhow and her daughter during her time at the Old Capitol Prison.

arrested. The captain, his career ruined, died sometime later, reportedly a suicide.

A week later, Pinkerton arrested Greenhow at her home and seized documents and personal letters that linked her to Senators Wilson and Lane, along with many other well-known Washingtonians. She

was charged with “being a spy in the interest of the rebels and furnishing the insurgent generals with important information relative to the movements of the Union forces.” For ten months, she and several female friends were held in her home. Because she kept attempting to smuggle out messages, she was put in the Old Capitol Prison (now the site of the United States Supreme Court Building). She was released in June 1862 and sent through federal and Confederate lines to Richmond. After Greenhow’s capture, the cipher that Jordan had devised apparently was used for deceptive messages sent by Union officers. Writing about the cipher to Confederate Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin, Jordan said, “Being my first attempt, and hastily devised, it may be deciphered by any expert, as I found after use of it for a time.”

The Confederates operated at least two other intelligence networks in Washington, both run by cavalrymen and probably set up by the Secret Service Bureau, a clandestine unit within the Confederacy’s Signal Corps. The bureau, a part of the Confederate War Department in Richmond, was commanded by Major William Norris, a former Baltimore lawyer. The Signal Corps ran the army’s semaphore service while the Secret Service Bureau oversaw a communications network whose missions included the running of agents to and from Union territory and the forwarding of messages from Confederate officials in Richmond to contacts in Canada and Europe.

One of the bureau’s most important tasks was the obtaining of open-source material, especially newspapers, from the North, primarily through sympathizers in Maryland, including postmasters. The newspapers provided information—and, occasionally, agents’ messages hidden in personal columns.

The delivery system—sometimes called “our Government route”—boldly relied on the U.S. mail along part of the way. One “mail agent,” a Marylander who lived near Washington, regularly drove his cart there, collected South-bound documents from network members, then hid the mail in manure that he picked up for his garden. Typically, an agent in Union territory wrote a letter, probably in cipher, addressed it to a specific person, such as “Secretary of War, Richmond, Va.,” and placed it in an envelope, which was then sealed and placed inside a second envelope. A U.S. stamp was put

on that envelope, which was addressed to a collaborator, usually in Maryland. He or she would then continue the letter on its way by handing it to the first of a relay of mail agents for delivery to “signal camps” in Virginia.

Confederate mail supervisors established several accommodation addresses (as they would be called today) so that a suspiciously large amount of mail did not get delivered to one recipient. The system depended mostly on volunteers, some of whom made the enterprise profitable by adding smuggling to their espionage.

There were also riverside farms where Southern sympathizers maintained simple signal systems. One of the signalers was 24-year-old Mary Watson, who hung a black dress or shawl from a dormer window to warn boatmen across the river that Union troops were near.

Union officers assigned to investigating the rebel special-delivery operation occasionally made arrests of mail agents, but the mail kept going through. Major General William T. Sherman was particularly incensed by the regular delivery of northern newspapers. Newspaper correspondents, he fumed, “should be treated as spies...and are worth a hundred thousand men to the enemy.” Yet, like other commanders on both sides, he planted false information in newspapers, well knowing that the enemy would read and perhaps believe the deception.

Although the focus of Confederate espionage was initial-



John S. Mosby

ly on Washington, as the war went on, intelligence gathering became more tactical. Distinctions blurred between “spies” and “scouts.” But an age-old custom prevailed: if you were caught in your army’s uniform, you were a prisoner of war; if you were in disguise, you were a spy and could be hanged. Men who rode with the “Gray Ghost,” John S. Mosby, and other such military

units were usually considered soldiers. Many other riders, particularly a Confederate espionage group known as Coleman's Scouts, were treated as spies.

When Yankee troops captured a group of riders behind Union lines in Tennessee, they singled out one young man who had documents concealed under his saddle and in his clothing. Besides information about federal defenses in Nashville, the man, Sam Davis, had a piece of paper signed E. Coleman.

Union interrogators, seeking information on the notorious Coleman's Scouts, focused their attention on Davis. He knew that "Coleman" was the cover name of Captain H. B. Shaw, who had also been captured and was being held in a nearby cell. But when Brigadier General Grenville M. Dodge, a Union intelligence officer, demanded to know who and where Coleman was, Davis refused to talk. He remained silent even when Dodge threatened to hang him.

Davis, a 21-year-old infantryman, was a courier for Shaw. When he was hanged on November 27, 1863, he went into Confederate legend not as a courier, but as a spy. The legend has him say, "I would sooner die a thousand deaths than betray a friend or be false to duty." He

became "the South's Nathan Hale," one of many captives executed as spies by both sides. The number of suspected spies executed by both sides is not known because of the lack of records and the secrecy that surrounded most executions.

Because "spies" and "scouts" were used interchangeably, it is difficult to sort out "espionage," which is the work of spies, from "reconnaissance," which is the work of trained observers, such as cavalry scouts. Confederate General Robert E. Lee, for example, received a steady stream of intelligence from what would be called agents or spies today. In a report to Confederacy President Jefferson Davis, Lee said that "our scouts on the Potomac" had learned that a Union army was about to march because "three days' rations had been cooked and placed in the haversacks of the men." Another so-called Southern scout seemed more likely to be a spy because he "was able to converse with" Union troops to get an accurate estimate of the size of a deployment.

Lee's greatest scout, Major General Jeb Stuart, won public fame as a dashing cavalryman leading audacious raids behind Union lines. But when he was killed in action in 1864, Lee gave him an epitaph worthy of a great spy: "He never brought me a piece of false information."

The Flamboyant Spy

James Ewell Brown Stuart, better known as Jeb Stuart, was the grandson of a Revolutionary War hero and son of an Army officer who served in the War of 1812. Jeb Stuart was born in the family homestead in Patrick County, Virginia, on February 6, 1833. After attending Emory and Henry College, he entered the U.S. Military Academy, graduating in 1854. Three years later, as a cavalry officer in the West, he was wounded in an Indian battle.

While on duty in the Kansas Territory, Stuart pursued an abolitionist known as Ossawatimie Brown, who was accused of illegally freeing slaves. On October 17, 1859, Stuart and Brown would cross paths again. Stuart accompanied Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Lee, who led a U.S. Marine force to Harpers Ferry to fight raiders who had seized the federal arsenal and rifle factory there. John Brown, who called himself Isaac Smith, had barricaded himself and his followers in the armory fire engine house. Lee sent Stuart to the door with a white flag. The man known as Smith "opened the door about four inches, and placed his body against the crack, with a carbine in his hand," Stuart later wrote. "Hence his remark after his capture that he could have wiped me out like a mosquito. When Smith first came to the door, I recognized old Ossawatimie Brown who had given us so much trouble in Kansas." Later, Stuart searched Brown's lodgings and found documents that disclosed details of Brown's plans for leading a slave revolt. This was Stuart's first venture into the gathering of intelligence.

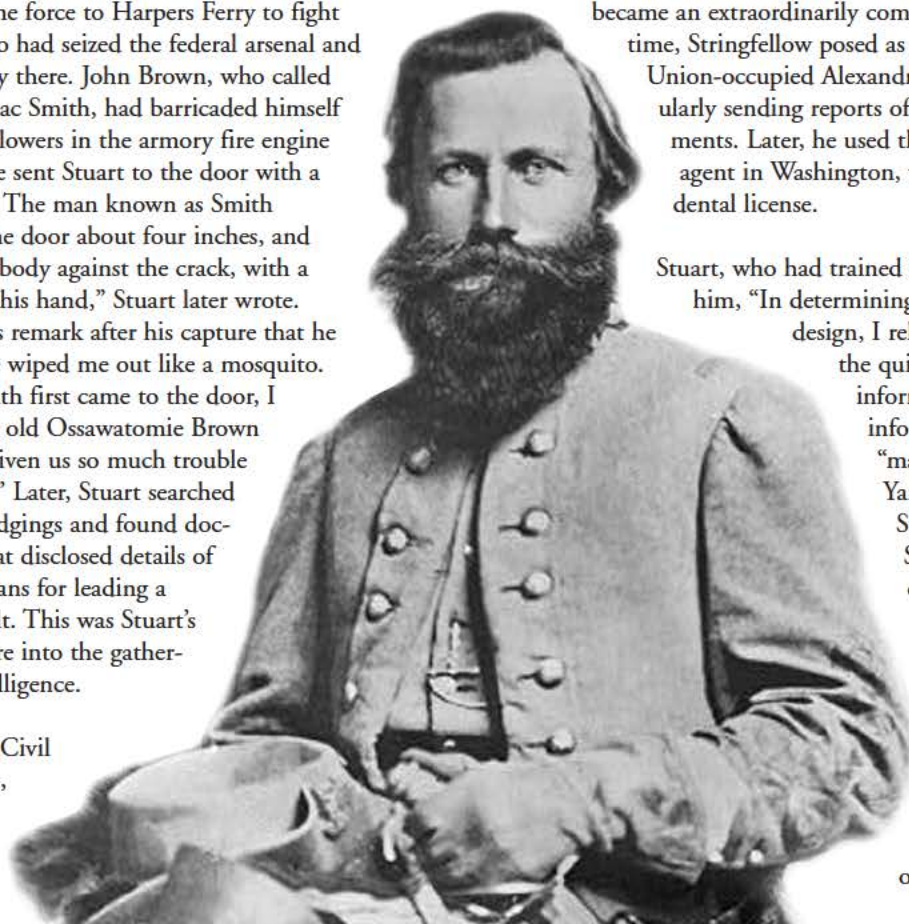
When the Civil War began, Stuart

resigned his U.S. Army commission and joined the Confederacy. He rose rapidly, becoming a brigadier general in 1861 and in 1862, as a major general, chief of cavalry of the Army of Northern Virginia. He seemed too flamboyant to be a spy. "He could wear, without exciting a suspicion of unfitness, all the warlike adornments of an old-time cavalier," a biographer wrote of Stuart. "His black plume, and hat caught up with a golden star, seemed the proper frame for a knightly face...." At a time when scout and spy were often used interchangeably, Stuart's military exploits eclipsed his espionage at least in public. But Stuart's espionage was well-known by General Robert E. Lee, who took a personal interest in the covert work of Stuart's scouts. One of them, Lee wrote, "sometimes acted under my special direction."

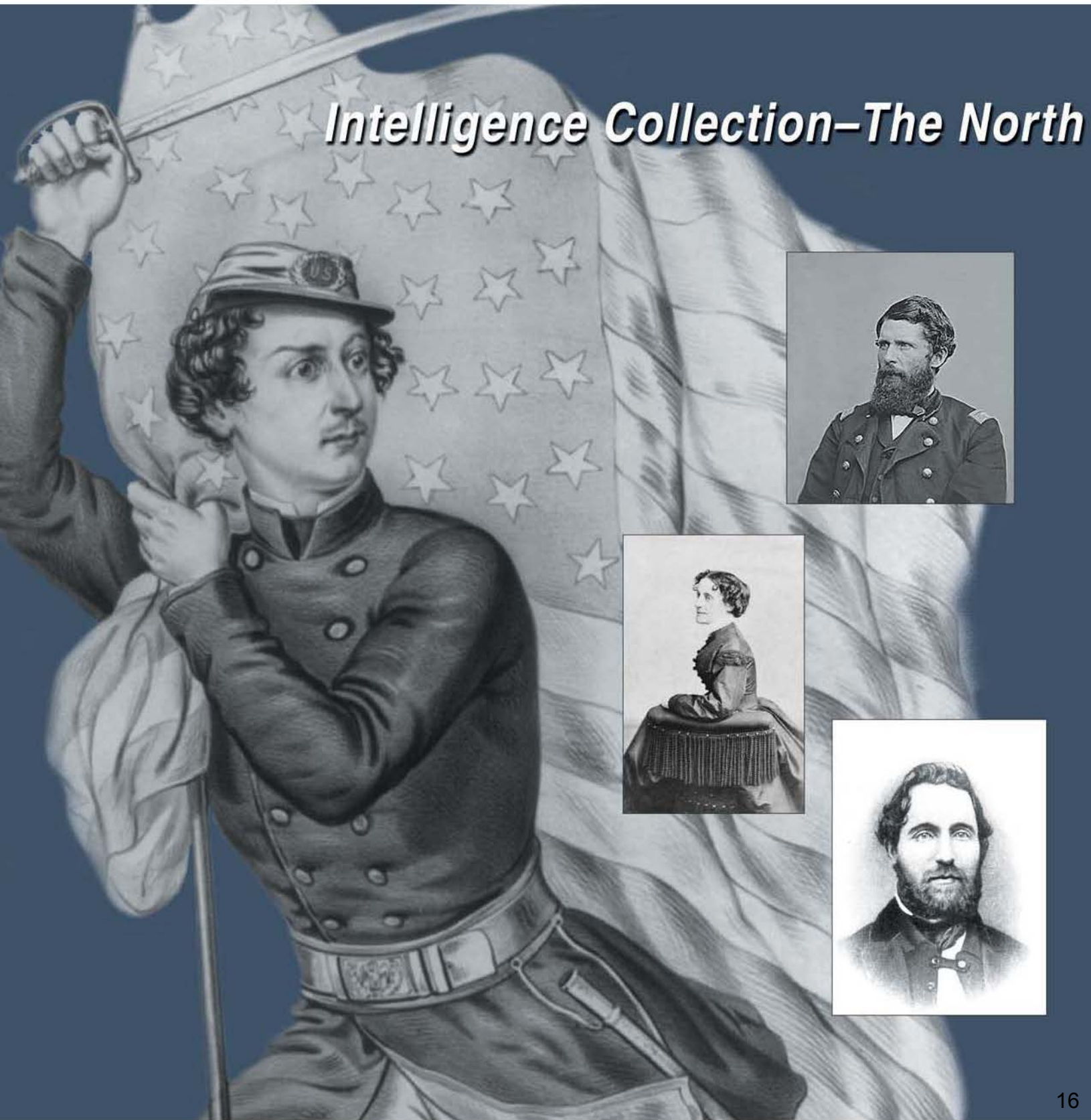
One of Stuart's scouts, Benjamin Franklin Stringfellow, became an extraordinarily competent agent. For a time, Stringfellow posed as a dentist's assistant in Union-occupied Alexandria, Virginia, while regularly sending reports of Union troop movements. Later, he used the same cover while an agent in Washington, where he even got a dental license.

Stuart, who had trained Stringfellow, said of him, "In determining the enemy's real design, I rely upon you, as well as the quick transmission of the information." Stringfellow's information, Stuart said, "may be worth all the Yankee trains" that Stuart attacked.

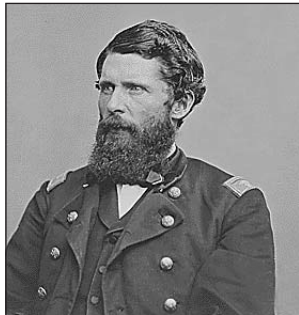
Stuart's colorful career ended on May 11, 1864, when he was fatally wounded while defending Richmond. When Lee learned of Stuart's death, he said, "I can scarcely think of him without weeping."



Intelligence Collection–The North



Intelligence Collection—The North



Lafayette Baker

While the Confederacy focused on getting intelligence to Richmond via the couriers of the Secret Line, the Union did not have any similar system. Union generals handled intelligence gathering as a task for their own commands. Early in the war, for example, when Major General George B. McClellan became commander of the Union's Army of the Potomac, Allan Pinkerton moved to

Washington to gather intelligence for McClellan. Pinkerton worked for McClellan, not the entire Union Army. Even so, Pinkerton later called himself "Chief of the United States Secret Service." A similar claim came after the war from Lafayette C. Baker, who performed counterintelligence and oversaw security for Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Army.

There was no centrally directed intelligence agency in Washington. Pinkerton and Baker worked only for their superiors. They ran their organizations so independently and so competitively that, in at least two cases, the operatives of one "secret service" arrested or kept under surveillance the operatives of the other.

The Union never developed a need for a national intelligence agency. The gathering of intelligence was, in fact, so decentralized that President Lincoln himself even hired an agent on his own, paid him, and personally received the agent's reports.

William A. Lloyd, a publisher of railroad and steamer guides for railroads and steamers in the South, approached Lincoln early in the war, looking for a pass through Confederate lines so that he could continue his business. Lincoln had a better idea: "Use the pass to go to the South and spy for me"—at \$200 a month plus expenses. (This would have the equivalent purchasing power of about \$4,000 today.)

Lloyd signed a contract in which he agreed to provide Lincoln personally with such intelligence as the number

and location of Confederate troops and the layouts of their forts and fortifications.

Lloyd headed into the Confederacy with his wife and maid, along with a publishing company employee, Thomas H. S. Boyd.

Because Lloyd had contracted to send his information directly to Lincoln, he did not use Union Army communications. Instead, he mailed the intelligence in letters to Boyd's family. Then a member of the family would take the letters to the White House with instructions to have them delivered directly to Lincoln, who presumably used the information to weigh against what he was getting from his generals.

Lloyd's arrangement with Lincoln resembled Pinkerton's with McClellan and Baker's with Scott: each agent was serving a man, not an agency. Pinkerton added to his services by doing some political spying for McClellan while contributing little useful intelligence.

In July 1861, with some 35,000 Union troops in Washington and Northern patriots clamoring for an "On to Richmond" campaign, Scott desperately needed whatever information he could get about Confederate strength around Manassas Junction, Virginia. In that hamlet, 25 miles from Washington, near a creek called Bull Run, Scott would launch the war's first major battle. Scott sent Baker to Manassas Junction.

According to Baker's memoir, he set forth to Manassas under the cover of a traveling photographer named Samuel Munson of Knoxville, Tennessee. Arrested in Manassas by the Confederates, he was questioned and sent on to Richmond, where, he claimed, Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy, questioned him, but could not break Baker's cover. Although he spent time in a Richmond jail and was under guard before being released, he said he had somehow managed to get enough information about Confederate forces to please Scott.

The information did not prevent a Union rout at Bull Run. The debacle ended Scott's career and began Baker's, for he became chief of what he sometimes called the National Detective Police. With about 30 employees and an appointment as "special provost marshal for the War Department," Baker worked not only on spy cases but also tracked down deserters and subversives, an all-inclusive label for Southerners suspected of treasonable acts,

and for “Copperheads,” Northerners with Southern sympathies. His most famous case involved the capture of Belle Boyd.



Belle Boyd

Belle, in her colorful biography, said that she had killed a Union soldier who demanded that she fly a U.S. flag over her home. By her account, she became a Confederate spy, and one day—as “the rifle-balls flew thick and fast about me”—she dashed through federal lines and gave vital information to Major General Thomas (Stonewall) Jackson. She was later arrested and brought before Baker, whom she portrayed as an arrogant rube she easily outwitted. Baker supposedly threatened her with life imprisonment (neither side ever executed a woman as a spy), but she was released without having been charged and sent to Richmond, where she was hailed as a heroine.

Pinkerton, meanwhile, was developing a different view of espionage, pursuing what today would be called actionable intelligence. He realized that when the war began, the Confederacy had agents-in-place in Washington, while Northerners had few assets in Richmond. Pinkerton knew he had to establish a counterintelligence presence in Washington—and that he had to get agents into Richmond.

Pinkerton started a Richmond connection by sending one of his best agents, Timothy Webster, to the Confederate capital. British-born Timothy Webster was a former New York City police officer skilled at making acquaintances with people who became willing, unwitting sources. As Pinkerton later wrote, everyone who met Webster “yielded to the magic of his blandishments and was disposed to serve him whenever possible.”

Webster got himself into Richmond under the cover of a secessionist acting as a courier from Baltimore using the Secret Line, the Confederate communications system. He ingratiated himself with Brigadier General John Henry Winder, who, as Richmond provost marshal, ran counterintelligence there. Winder was also in charge of prisoners of war east of the Mississippi and in that

role picked up kernels of intelligence. Webster put Winder in his debt by carrying letters to and from Winder’s son, William, who was a Union Army officer in Washington. Winder showed his gratitude by giving Webster a pass that allowed him to travel throughout the Confederacy.

On one of his trips across the Potomac River, Webster learned that Vincent Camalier, a Maryland secessionist, had been jailed as he attempted to cross into Virginia. Webster intervened, convincing the Union officer holding Camalier to release him. The act won Webster more friends among Southern sympathizers on both sides of the river. Webster probably did not know that Camalier was himself an agent for the Confederacy’s Secret Service Bureau.

Webster also impressed Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin, who accepted him as a courier and gave him documents to deliver to secessionists in Baltimore. Webster, transformed into a double agent by Benjamin, could thus deliver to Pinkerton not only reports based on Webster’s own observations, but also Confederate documents.



Timothy Webster

Pinkerton said that Webster’s reports were so long and richly detailed that Pinkerton and two operatives had to stay up all night to read and assess them. He gave precise descriptions of the fortifications protecting Richmond, reported on soldier morale, and noted food prices.

Suddenly, in February 1862, Webster’s reports stopped. Pinkerton sent operatives Pryce Lewis and John Scully to Richmond to see what had happened. They learned that Webster lay ill with inflammatory rheumatism in a Richmond hotel. He was being cared for by Hattie Lawton, posing as Webster’s wife, and her black servant, John Scobell. Both were Pinkerton operatives. A Richmond civilian who had lived in Washington recognized Scully and Lewis as Pinkerton men. Captured and jailed, they were threatened with hanging if they did not tell what they knew about Webster.

Both were released, presumably because they talked. Pinkerton, however, believed that only Lewis had betrayed Webster. (Lewis later went to New York and started

a detective agency.) Webster was arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. Lawton was also arrested as a spy, but officials, believing that no slave could be a spy, let Scobell go. After learning about Webster's death sentence, Pinkerton went to Lincoln, who sent Confederacy President Jefferson Davis a message threatening to hang Confederates then held as spies if Webster were executed. Despite Lincoln's message, he was hanged on April 29, 1862. There is no record of an immediate Union reprisal, but records of executions by the Union and the Confederacy are sketchy and, as the war went on, retaliatory executions of spies did occur.

Lawton maintained her cover as Webster's widow until she was sent to the North in a prison exchange about a year after the hanging. While she was in prison, Elizabeth Van Lew, a Richmond woman who provided food and clothing to Union prisoners, asked in vain for Lawton's release. Neither woman seems to have known that the other was a spy for the Union.

Van Lew sometimes showed touches of eccentricity—causing her to be known as “Crazy Bet.” But, in her role as self-made spy, she was cunning, outwitting Confederate detectives, enciphering messages, and managing a clandestine operation that was both an underground, which helped Union prisoners to escape, and a spy network, which provided Union generals with valuable intelligence.

Through couriers she recruited, she sent intelligence dispatches containing specific information, such as, “eight guns have been sent to Chaffin's farm to be put in position.” Once she used a Confederate deserter to carry out of Richmond a message warning that “the enemy are planting torpedoes [mines] on all roads leading to the city.”

In the spring of 1862, when Elizabeth Van Lew heard that McClellan was launching a campaign to take Richmond, she prepared a room for him—“a charming chamber” with “pretty curtains”—in her imposing Church Hill mansion. McClellan never made it to her home, or to Richmond. Pinkerton, who accompanied McClellan on the campaign, provided the general with extraordinarily overestimated reports on the number of Confederate troops between McClellan and Richmond.

McClellan, who himself was naturally inclined to embellish troop strength estimates, believed Pinkerton's numbers. At

one point, when 80,000 Confederates faced McClellan's 100,000 troops, Pinkerton estimated that McClellan was outnumbered nearly two-to-one. This gave McClellan the right to claim, in a dispatch to Washington, that he was opposed by “greatly superior numbers.”

Not Pinkerton, but a corporal named Barton W. Mitchell gave McClellan one of the most important pieces of intelligence ever presented to a general in battle. On September 13, 1862, Corporal Mitchell had been resting with a sergeant in a campground near Frederick, Maryland, when he noticed an envelope in the grass. Inside were three cigars wrapped in a copy of General Robert E. Lee's Special Orders No. 191, perhaps dropped by a galloping Confederate courier.

The two soldiers took the envelope to their company captain who started it on a swift upward path to McClellan. The envelope contained the most important intelligence discovery of the war. As McClellan wrote Lincoln, “I have all the plans of the rebels.” Incredibly, the discovery of the document was leaked and appeared in the *New York Herald*, but apparently the story was not seen by Confederate officers monitoring Northern newspapers.

The order revealed to McClellan that Lee planned to divide his army into four parts, three to head for Harpers Ferry and the fourth to Hagerstown, Maryland. The order was four days old when it fell into McClellan's hands. But, instead of reacting speedily, he characteristically reacted slowly. The incredible intelligence coup had done him no good. Lee's forces were not attacked when the cigar-wrapping document revealed his plan. The result was the bloody battle of Antietam, fought at terrible cost for both sides. And when Lee headed back to Virginia, McClellan did not pursue.

On November 7, 1862, Lincoln relieved McClellan of command. Pinkerton resigned in sympathy, taking with him the information he and his operatives had gathered on the Confederacy.

The Union's "Lady in Richmond"

Elizabeth Van Lew, whose wealthy family was well-known in Richmond society, was educated in Philadelphia and returned home an ardent abolitionist who convinced her mother to free the family slaves. When the Civil War started, she became an outspoken supporter of the Union. At first, braving the contempt of her social peers, she cared for hospitalized Union prisoners. Then she began helping them to escape, sometimes hiding them in the attic of her mansion.

Late in 1863, escapees told Major General Benjamin Butler about Elizabeth Van Lew. Butler, then in charge of Union-occupied eastern Virginia, sent one of the escapees back to Richmond with orders to contact her and ask her to spy for the Union. She agreed. Butler gave her a simple cipher system for her reports. She kept the cipher key in the case of her watch and often wrote her reports in invisible ink.

Butler soon passed on to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton a sample of the quality of the information he had been getting "from a lady in Richmond." She told where new artillery batteries were being set up, reported that three cavalry regiments had been "disbanded by General Lee for want of horses," and revealed that the Confederacy "intended to remove to Georgia very soon all the Federal prisoners." (They were sent to the notorious Andersonville prison.)

Once, at Butler's request, Van Lew carried out a risky mission. She walked into the office of Brigadier General John H. Winder, who, as provost marshal, sought out subversives in Richmond. There, she handed to Winder's chief detective a note that recruited him as a Union agent. Although she certainly was in peril as she stood in Winder's headquarters, it was, according to her diary, the detective who "turned deadly pale."

By June 1864, the Richmond underground had five "depots," where couriers could deliver their reports for pickup by Union operatives slipping through Confederate lines.

One depot was the Van Lew family farm just outside Richmond. She was running more than a dozen agents and couriers, including her own African-American servants. Sometimes they carried messages in scraped-out eggs hidden among real eggs or among the paper patterns carried by a seamstress. Another agent was a baker who used his delivery wagon as a cover for picking up and passing on reports.



Elizabeth Van Lew,
courtesy of
The Virginia Historical Society,
Richmond, Virginia

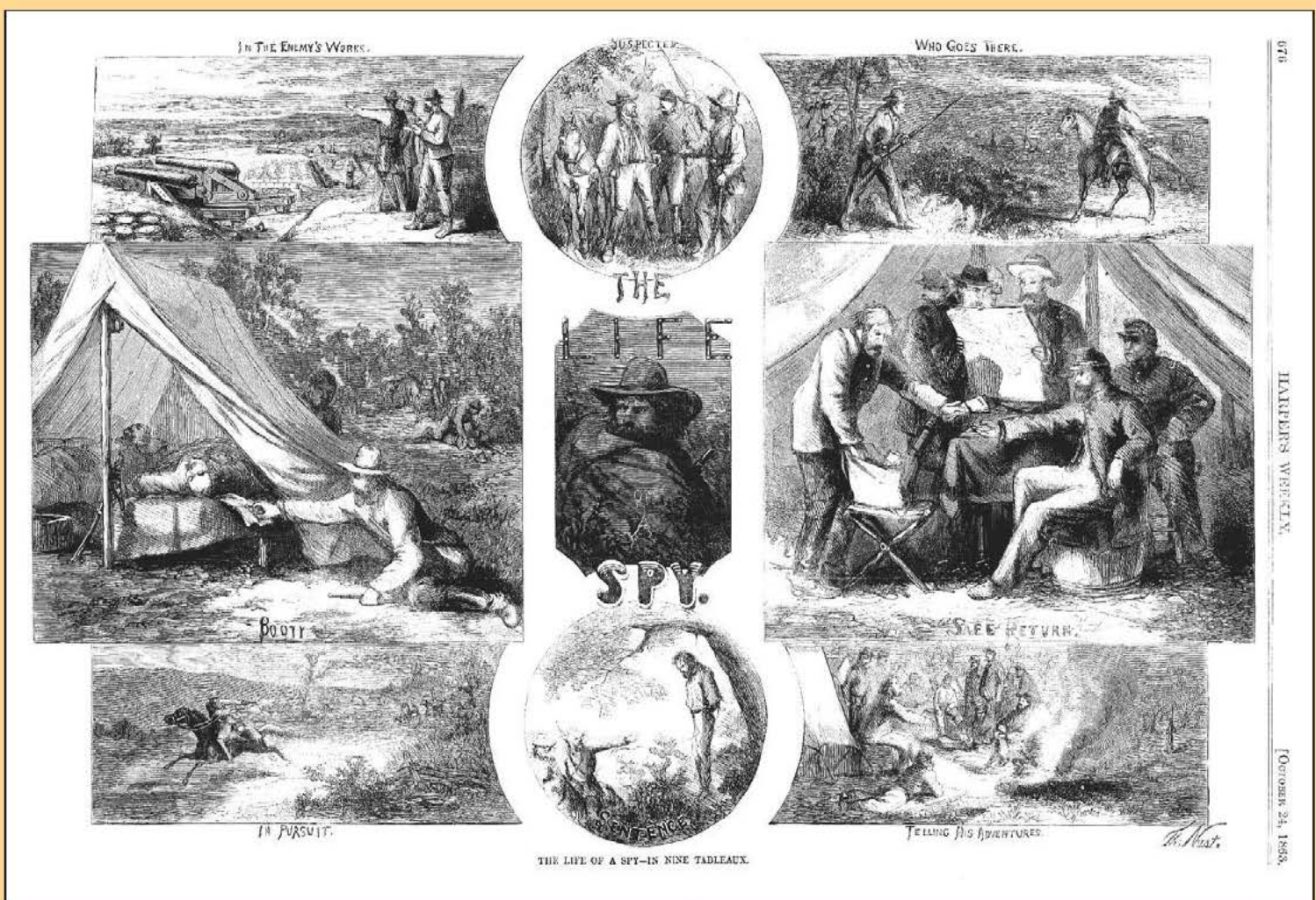
Van Lew left a journal that contained cautious references to her work for the Union. But after the war, she asked the War Department for all her dispatches, which she destroyed to protect her network from post-war retribution. In her journal, which survived destruction, she noted that she was called a traitor in the South and a spy in the North; she said she preferred "the honored name of 'Faithful' because of my loyalty to my country."

She was appointed postmistress of Richmond by President Ulysses S. Grant, bestowing upon her one of the highest federal posts then available to a woman. *The Richmond Enquirer* and *Examiner* condemned the appointment "of a Federal spy" as a "deliberate insult to our people." President Rutherford B. Hayes did not reappoint her.

In 1883, she passed a civil service examination "with the highest rating" and moved to Washington, D.C., where she became a U.S. Post Office clerk. She resigned in 1887, after being demoted by a vindictive supervisor. She returned to Richmond, where she became a recluse, "shunned like the plague."

She died in 1900. A plaque attached to her gravestone reads in part: "She risked everything that is dear to man—friends—fortune—comfort—health—life itself—all for the one absorbing desire of her heart—that slavery might be abolished and the Union preserved."

Bureau of Military Information



Courtesy of Harpweek LLC

Well aware that telegraph wires could be tapped, he enciphered his dispatches and sent them by messenger. At times, he had as many as 100 men and women working for him from Mississippi to Georgia. His security precautions were so thorough that little still is known about his operations or the names of most of his agents. When Dodge's commander, Major General Stephen A. Hurlbut, demanded those names, Dodge refused. Hurlbut then threatened to cut off Dodge's spy funds. Grant backed Dodge.

In the eastern theater of the war, Major General Joseph Hooker, who had been given command of the Army of the Potomac in January 1863, ordered his deputy provost marshal, Colonel George H. Sharpe, to create a unit to gather intelligence. Sharpe was aided by John C. Babcock, who had worked for Pinkerton and had made maps for McClellan. Babcock, who had been an architect in Chicago before the war, was a civilian but was unofficially called "Captain Babcock." He became a skilled interrogator of Confederate prisoners and deserters. He was also an expert on Confederate order-of-battle; in one of his reports, his estimate of enemy forces was off by less than one percent.

Sharpe, a New York lawyer in civilian life, set up what he called the Bureau of Military Information, which foreshadowed the U.S. Army's Military Intelligence Division. Sharpe's bureau produced reports based on information collected from agents, prisoners of war, refugees, Southern newspapers, documents retrieved from battlefield corpses, and other sources. Sharpe assembled about 70 agents who were carried on the rolls as "guides." Major General Philip H. Sheridan, operating in the Shenandoah Valley, said the guides "cheerfully go wherever ordered, to obtain that great essential of success, information." Of the 30 or 40 guides roaming the valley, 10 were killed in action.

An example of Sharpe's thoroughness can be seen in a nine-part report produced in May 1863 as General Robert E. Lee began moving troops in a march that ultimately ended at Gettysburg. The report begins with a detailed order-of-battle and later notes, "The Confederate army is under marching orders, and an order from General Lee was very lately read to the

troops, announcing a campaign of long marches and hard fighting, in a part of the country where they would have no railroad transportation."

By the time Grant began his siege of Petersburg in June 1864, Sharpe was Grant's intelligence chief, stationed in Grant's headquarters at City Point, Virginia. So much intelligence was flowing out of Richmond and into Sharpe's Bureau of Military Information that a clerk in the Confederate War Department wrote in his diary, "The enemy are kept fully informed of everything transpiring here." The clerk appealed directly to President Jefferson Davis, warning that "there was no ground for hope unless communication with the enemy's country were checked...."

Sharpe's reports are full of detailed references to the whereabouts and numbers of troops, based on counting tents; the length of an artillery train (for determining the number of cannons); the number of guards at fortifications and ammunition dumps. "One of my lines is running very well now," Sharpe said in one report, offering to provide "any specific information" wanted by Grant.

Grant was also getting help from Samuel Ruth, superintendent of the Richmond, Fredericksburg, and Potomac Railroad—and a secret Unionist. Ruth provided information about Confederate Army movements and, as a railroad executive, managed to slow down the repairing of bridges and the shipping of supplies to embattled Richmond. Under instructions from Sharpe, Elizabeth Van Lew, the most important Union agent in the Richmond underground, had recruited Ruth. He apparently formed an interlocking spy ring, using railroad workers and others as his sub-agents.

Ruth was arrested in a sudden Confederate sweep on suspected agents, but he was soon released because, as *The Richmond Whig* reported, "There was not the slightest shadow of evidence against him." After the court released him, *The Whig* indignantly said, "The charge against Ruth was trumped up." For the rest of the war, Ruth remained a respected Richmond citizen—and a Yankee spy serving the Bureau of Military Information.

Giving Grant All He Wanted

George H. Sharpe, descendant of an old American family, came from Kingston, New York. At the age of 19, he graduated from Rutgers—giving the salutatory address in Latin—and went on to Yale Law School. He passed the New York bar in 1849, but did not begin practicing for several years because he wanted to travel in Europe. While there, Sharpe studied European languages and served at times in U.S. diplomatic posts in Vienna and Rome.

When the war began, he was in a New York militia as a captain. In 1862, he organized a regiment which was assigned to the defense of Washington. Early in 1863, Colonel Sharpe was made a deputy provost marshal general—essentially, an intelligence officer—assigned to run the Bureau of Military Information. The bureau had been set up by Major General Joseph Hooker, then commander of the Army of the Potomac.

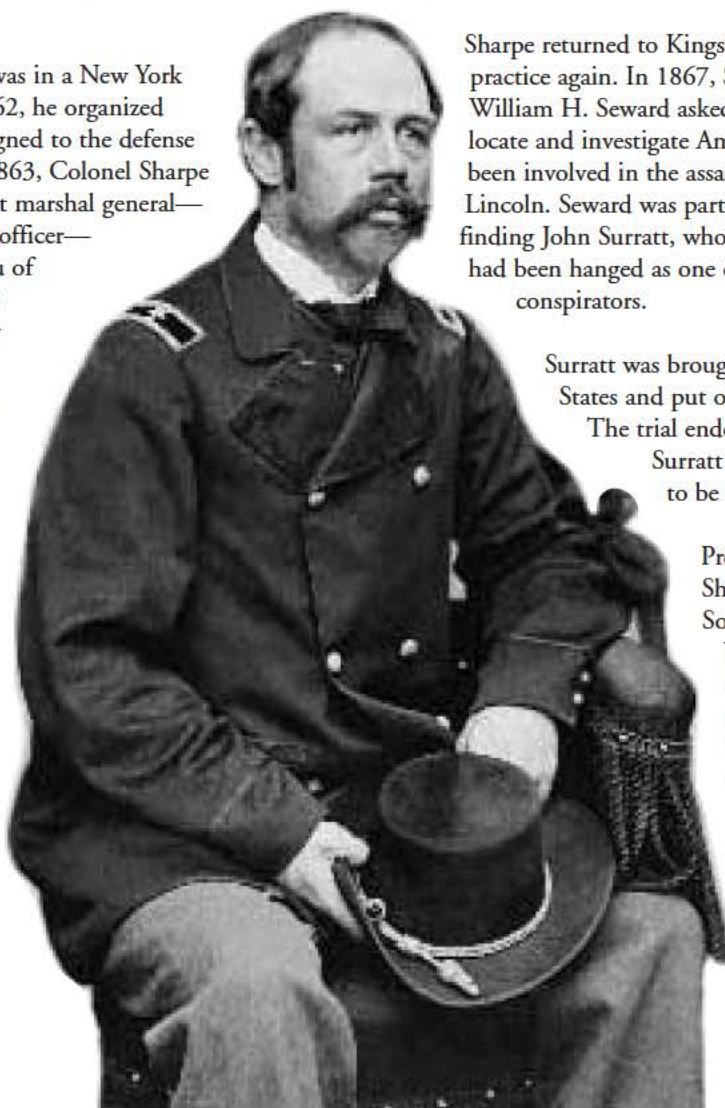
General Ulysses S. Grant, after creating the Armies Operating Against Richmond in July 1864, put Sharpe's Bureau of Military Information directly into Grant's headquarters at City Point, Virginia. Grant said Sharpe's work enabled him to "keep track of every change the enemy makes."

In February 1864, Sharpe was promoted to brigadier general. His last task was at Appomattox, where he oversaw the granting of parole certificates to the soldiers of the Army of Virginia after the surrender of General Robert E. Lee. Out of respect for Lee, Sharpe gallantly declined to issue him a parole. But Lee said he, too, was a member of that defeated army, and Sharpe issued him a parole.

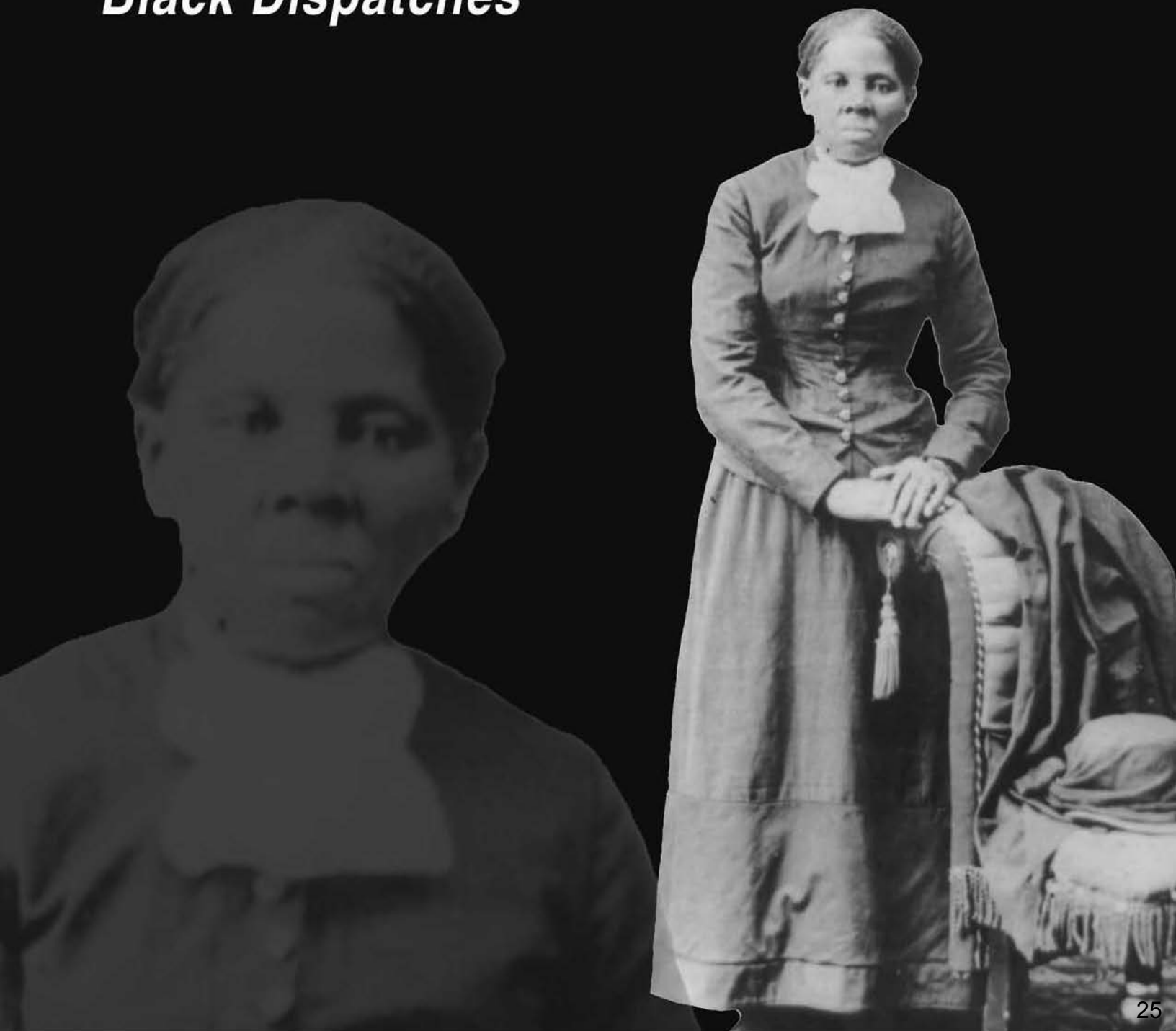
Sharpe returned to Kingston and took up his law practice again. In 1867, Secretary of State William H. Seward asked him to go to Europe to locate and investigate Americans who might have been involved in the assassination of President Lincoln. Seward was particularly interested in finding John Surratt, whose mother, Mary Surratt, had been hanged as one of the assassination conspirators.

Surratt was brought back to the United States and put on trial in a civilian court. The trial ended with a hung jury, and Surratt was soon set free, never to be tried again.

President Grant appointed Sharpe U.S. marshal for the Southern District of New York State. His investigation of political corruption in New York City helped to smash the Tweed Ring run by Boss (William Marcy) Tweed. Sharpe later was elected to the New York State Assembly. He died in 1900.



Black Dispatches



Black Dispatches

Union officers got so many valuable pieces of intelligence from slaves that the reports were put in a special category: "Black Dispatches." Runaway slaves, many of them conscripted to work on Confederate fortifications, gave the Union Army a continually flowing stream of intelligence. So did slaves who volunteered to be stay-in-place agents.

Tens of thousands of ex-slaves fought and died for the Union in military units. Less known is the work of other African-Americans who risked their lives in secret, gathering intelligence or while entering enemy territory as scouts. Brigadier General Grenville M. Dodge mentioned how he used black scouts during a search for Confederate troops in Tennessee: "Two negroes led our cavalry to them, guiding them around their pickets. No white man had the pluck to do it."

Throughout the official records of the war, there are frequent references to bits of intelligence coming from "contrabands." The term tracks back to a demand for runaway slaves from a Virginia slaveowner who cited the Fugitive Slave Law when he learned that his slaves had fled to Union territory. Responding, Major General Benjamin Butler said that since secession, Virginia had not been under federal law. Butler referred to the slaves as "contraband of war," and the term caught on.

In a typical report: "Three contrabands came in from Fort Johnson yesterday. They were officers' servants, and report, from conversation of the officers there, that north and northwest faces of Fort Sumter are nearly as badly breached as the gorge wall, and that many of our projectiles passed through both walls, and that the fort contains no serviceable guns."

George Scott escaped from a plantation near Yorktown and headed for Fort Monroe, at the mouth of the James River on the tip of the Virginia peninsula. On the way, he noted two large fortifications. To gather more intelligence, Scott joined a Union officer on scouting missions. On one such mission, Scott was the target of a Confederate picket, whose bullet missed Scott's body, but put a hole in his jacket. Another slave worked on the

defenses of Leesburg. He escaped, bringing with him his detailed observations about the deployment of 5,000 Confederate troops. Many other

slaves provided similar information about Confederate plans and maneuvers.

While Allan Pinkerton was serving as Major General George D. McClellan's intelligence chief, the private detective ordered a careful debriefing of runaway slaves, some of whom he personally recruited to go back as agents. One of Pinkerton's black agents was John Scobell of Mississippi, who had been educated and freed by his owner. Scobell used the cover of servant to two other Pinkerton agents, Timothy Webster and Carrie Lawton, when they operated in Richmond. Scobell also posed as a cook and a laborer on his trips south, where he often signed up black couriers for the Union at secret meetings of the Legal League, an underground slave organization.

Another black spy for Pinkerton was W. H. Ringgold, a free man who had been forced to work on a Virginia riverboat that was moving Confederate troops and supplies. After about six months, he and the other crewmen were allowed to return to the North. Debriefed by Pinkerton, Ringgold told all he knew about Confederate fortifications on the Virginia peninsula. When McClellan began his peninsula campaign in March 1862, the best intelligence he had was from Ringgold.

The Union Navy also profited from Black Dispatches. Robert Smalls, a free African-American who was a harbor pilot knowledgeable about Fernandina, Florida, noticed that Confederates were preparing to destroy the harbor as they withdrew. He realized that Fernandina would provide the Union with a good port for blockade ships patrolling Charleston.

In March 1862, Smalls rowed out to a Union warship and reported what he had seen. The fleet, waiting to attack Fernandina, moved swiftly before the damage was done and captured the port. In another instance, Smalls loaded his family and other African-American sailors aboard a Confederate patrol ship in Charleston, calmly gave the correct countersigns to Confederate signals as he sailed her out of the harbor, and surrendered her to a Union blockade ship. He and the crew were rewarded with half the value of the captured ship.

Mary Touvestre, a freed slave, worked as a housekeeper for one of the Confederate engineers who were repairing the U.S. Navy's Merrimac. The steam-powered frigate had been partially burned on April 21, 1861, when Federal forces abandoned the Gosport Navy Yard. Rebuilt as an ironclad, she was renamed the C.S.S. Virginia. Touvestre overheard the engineers talking about the ship and realized its significance as a weapon against the Northern blockade. Traveling at great risk with a stolen set of plans, she made her way to Washington and got an audience with officials in the Department of the Navy.

Surprised by the momentum of the Confederate project, the officials speeded up the building of the Union ironclad, the Monitor. Some historians believe that if the former slave had not carried her warning to Washington, the Virginia might have had several unchallenged weeks for a rampage against vulnerable Union ships, thwarting the blockade long enough for the arrival of desperately needed supplies from Europe.

Harriet Tubman, one of the nation's most famous African-Americans, was also one of the war's most daring and effective spies. She is renowned as a conductor of the Underground Railroad. Her espionage work, like that of many black spies, is far less known. But her exploits, centered along the South Carolina coast, are well documented, mostly because they were military operations.

Early in 1863, after she had spent nearly a year caring for refugee slaves, Union officers in South Carolina decided that she would be more valuable as a covert operative. She was asked to assemble a small reconnaissance unit of ex-slaves who knew the region and could gather timely intelligence. She found nine men, some of them riverboat pilots who knew every inch of the waterways threading through the coastal lowlands. One of her tasks was the finding of "torpedoes," as remotely-detonated mines were called then, placed along the waterways patrolled by Union river craft.

Her spying and scouting evolved into a kind of special forces operation under Colonel James Montgomery. A fervent believer in guerrilla warfare, Montgomery was a veteran of antislavery border fighting in Kansas. Like Tubman, he had met and admired firebrand abolitionist John Brown.

In July 1863, Tubman became Montgomery's second-in-command during a night raid up the Combahee River, near Beaufort, South Carolina. The Union gunboats, carrying some 300 black troops, slipped up the river, eluding torpedoes that Tubman's men had spotted. Undetected, the raiders swarmed ashore, destroyed a Confederate supply depot, torched homes and warehouses, and rounded up more than 750 rice plantation slaves.

"The enemy," said a Confederate report on the raid, "seems to have been well posted as to the character and capacity of our troops ... and to have been well guided by persons thoroughly acquainted with the river and country." Unwittingly, the report was praising the work of slaves working for Tubman.

Reporting on the raid to Secretary of War Stanton, Brigadier General Rufus Saxton said, "This is the only military command in American history wherein a woman, black or white, led the raid, and under whose inspiration, it was originated and conducted." Tubman's spies added to the heroic chronicles of the Black Dispatches. "This source of information," said one historian, "represented the single most prolific and productive category of intelligence obtained and acted on by Union forces throughout the Civil War."

One of the boldest—and least known—Northern spies of the war was a free African-American who went under cover as a slave in what appears to have been a plan to place her in the official residence of Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

The residence, called the Richmond White House, served as the Davis home and the President's executive office. While he conducted Confederacy business there, he would not have seen his slaves as a threat to security. Official papers did not have to be given special protection when slaves were around because, by law, slaves had to be illiterate.

Elizabeth Van Lew well knew this law, and, while running her spy ring in Richmond, realized the espionage value of a slave who was secretly able to read and write. Van Lew had a perfect candidate for such an agent-in-place role: Mary Elizabeth Bowser.

The wealthy Van Lew family, which had 21 slaves in 1850, had only two by 1860—both of them elderly women. Yet, Virginia and Richmond archives show that the Van Lews had not gone through the legal procedures for the freeing of slaves. Freedom meant exile. Under Virginia law, freed slaves had to leave Virginia within a year after winning their freedom. Only by ignoring that law could Van Lew carry out the audacious placement of an agent in the Richmond White House.

Elizabeth Van Lew and her widowed mother Eliza raised the eyebrows of their social acquaintances in Richmond in 1846 by having a slave baptized as Mary Jane Richards in St. John's Episcopal Church, revered as the site where Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty or give me death." Later, Elizabeth sent Mary Jane off to Philadelphia for an education. In 1855, Mary Jane sailed to Liberia, the African nation founded by Americans as a colony for ex-slaves.

On March 5, 1860, a ship bearing Mary Jane Richards arrived in Baltimore. She went on to Richmond—an illegal act for a freed slave. Five months later, she was arrested for "perambulating the streets and claiming to be a free person of color...." She was briefly jailed and released after Elizabeth Van Lew paid a \$10 fine and claimed that Mary Jane was still a slave. This declaration would give her perfect cover as an agent. Mary Jane Richards married and became Mary Elizabeth Bowser. It is under that name that she enters Civil War espionage history.

Information about her is scanty. One good source is Thomas McNiven, who posed as a baker while making daily rounds as a Van Lew agent in Richmond. From him, down the years, came the report that she "had a photographic mind" and "Everything she saw on the Rebel President's Desk, she could repeat word for word."

Jefferson Davis' widow, Varina, responding to an inquiry in 1905, denied that the Richmond White House had harbored a spy. "I had no 'educated negro' in my household," she wrote. She did not mention that her coachman, William A. Jackson, had crossed into Union lines, bringing with him military conversations that he had overheard. In a letter from Major General Irvin McDowell to Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton, "Jeff Davis' coachman" is cited as the source of information about Confederate deployments. A butler who served Jefferson Davis also made his way to Union lines.

Although McDowell and other Union generals could attest to the value of the Black Dispatches, the best endorsement came from General Robert E. Lee. "The chief source of information to the enemy," he wrote, "is through our negroes."

Harriet Ross was born into slavery in Maryland in 1819 or 1820. She was whipped when she was a small child, and, when she was 15 years old, was struck on the head by a scale weight hurled at a slave she was helping escape. The injury produced a life-long suffering from headaches and seizures. When she was 25 years old, she married John Tubman, a free African-American. About four years later, when her master died, she feared that she and her kin would be sold and scattered. So she began to think about escaping. Her husband declined to go with her, as did her brothers.

The courage and skill she used in her escape she would later use again as a spy for the Union.

Harriet Tubman fled to the North on the Underground Railroad, the network of abolitionists who helped slaves make their way to freedom. After freeing herself, she returned to Maryland, became a conductor on the railroad, and brought out members of her family. She made a score of dangerous trips, helping some 300 slaves reach the North. With each trip, she taught herself the ways of covert work behind enemy lines.

In 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Dred Scott, a black man who had moved from a free state to a slave state, had no right to sue for his freedom because African-Americans could not be citizens; the court also ruled that Congress did not have the power to prohibit slavery in the territories. The decision emboldened slaveholders and put Tubman in even more jeopardy. But, in that same year, she slipped into Maryland and conducted her elderly parents to freedom.

Because of fugitive slave laws, escapees could find ultimate freedom only in Canada. Tubman went frequently to the main underground terminal in Canada, St. Catharines, Ontario. There she met John Brown, who told her of his plans for an armed raid on Harpers Ferry. She later said that if she had not been ill at the time, she would have joined in the raid.

Tubman went to war in May 1861, joining a Union force dispatched to her native Maryland, which was a hotbed of Southern sympathizers. There, she knew, her knowledge of the land would be helpful to Union troops. Later, she served in the Union's Fort Monroe in Virginia. But it would be at her

The Conductor Becomes a Spy

next duty post, in South Carolina, that she would become a full-fledged undercover operative.

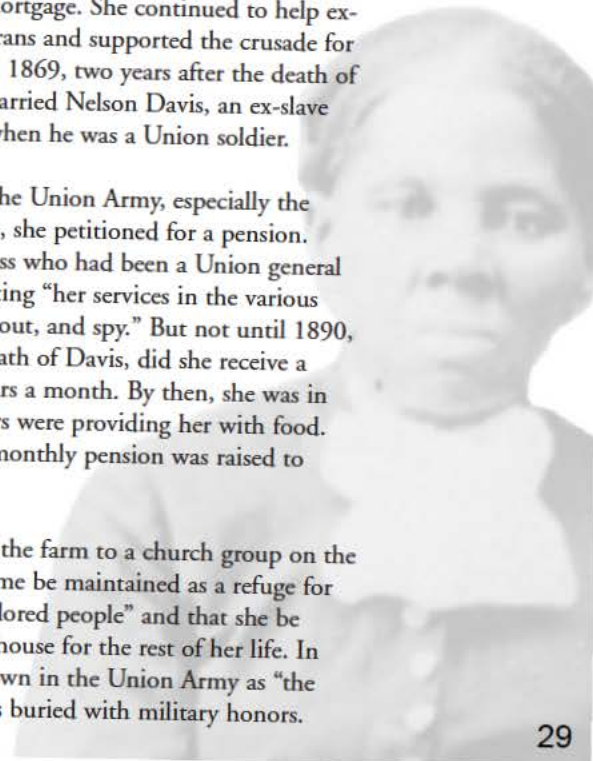
In the spring of 1862, Tubman sailed from New York City to Beaufort, South Carolina, the operations center for Union forces that held the southeastern coast of South Carolina. She was sent to the region at the suggestion of Massachusetts Governor John Andrew, who believed that "she would be a valuable person to operate within the enemy's lines in procuring information & scouts."

The Union-held area was a magnet for slaves fleeing to freedom. Tubman helped to clothe and feed them while also setting up agent networks and conferring with Union officers, including Colonel James Montgomery. He made her his second-in-command for the night raid up the Combahee River that freed more than 750 plantation slaves.

After the war, Harriet Tubman lived on a small farm in Auburn, New York. Years before, William A. Seward, then an anti-slavery senator from New York—later to be Lincoln's Secretary of State—had sold her the property and arranged for a mortgage. She continued to help ex-slaves and black veterans and supported the crusade for women's suffrage. In 1869, two years after the death of John Tubman, she married Nelson Davis, an ex-slave whom she had met when he was a Union soldier.

Citing her work for the Union Army, especially the Combahee River raid, she petitioned for a pension. A member of Congress who had been a Union general backed her claim, noting "her services in the various capacities of nurse, scout, and spy." But not until 1890, two years after the death of Davis, did she receive a pension of eight dollars a month. By then, she was in poverty, and neighbors were providing her with food. Nine years later, her monthly pension was raised to twenty dollars.

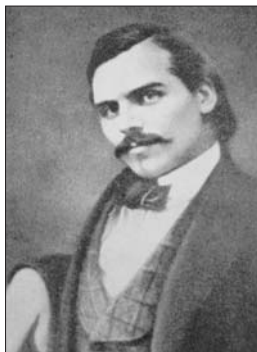
In 1903, she donated the farm to a church group on the condition that the home be maintained as a refuge for "aged and indigent colored people" and that she be allowed to live in the house for the rest of her life. In 1913, the woman known in the Union Army as "the General" died and was buried with military honors.



Intelligence's New Tools



Intelligence's New Tools



Thaddeus S. Lowe

Thaddeus S. Lowe, a 29-year-old balloon enthusiast, went up about 500 feet on June 18, 1861, looked down upon Washington, and, via a cable linking his balloon gondola to the War Department, telegraphed a message to President Lincoln: "The city, with its girdle of encampments, presents a superb scene...." It was the first wartime air-to-ground communication ever recorded in America. By linking the balloon to the telegraph, Lowe transformed

what had been a novel contraption at country fairs into a tool for a new kind of intelligence gathering: real-time aerial reconnaissance.

The demonstration had been arranged, not by military officers, but by Joseph Henry, first Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and an enthusiastic supporter of the use of balloons in war. With a note introducing Lowe, Lincoln nudged Lieutenant General Winfield Scott, commander-in-chief of the U.S. Army. The army soon accepted the new tool, forming the U.S. Army Balloon Corps. In March 1862, when Major General George B. McClellan began his campaign up the Virginia peninsula, Thaddeus Lowe, bearing the title Chief Aeronaut, went along. He had three balloons and what he described as an "aeronautic train, consisting of four army wagons and two gas generators."

At 3 o'clock one morning, Lowe went up and stayed aloft until daybreak, "observing the camp-fires and noting the movements of the enemy" around Yorktown. Brigadier General Fitz John Porter went up next, getting, from 1,000 feet, an unprecedented view of an American battlefield. As soon as he landed, Porter rounded up generals and mapmakers and drew up maps showing the Confederates' fortifications, based on what he and Lowe had seen while aloft.

Lowe made frequent flights to obtain tactical intelligence. On June 14, 1862, for instance, he went aloft near Richmond carrying a map on which he noted, in

red, "some of the most important earth works seen this morning."

The map had been prepared by John C. Babcock and "E.J. Allen S.S.U.S"—the cover name of Allan Pinkerton. The initials stand for "Secret Service, United States," Pinkerton's name for the organization he formed while working for McClellan.

As the Union began to make routine use of the new surveillance system, the Confederates reacted. They shot cannons at the balloons, but artillery, aimed by formulas involving trajectory from cannon to land target, could not easily become antiaircraft guns. Confederate artillery officers soon learned that when they shot their guns, they became targets of fire directed by Union artillery spotters in the balloons.

Then, in the age-old rhythm of intelligence, an espionage innovation produced a counter-innovation: The Confederates started camouflaging encampments and blacking out their camps after learning that Union balloonists counted campfires for estimates of troop strength. To fool daytime observers, Confederates painted logs black and arranged them to look like cannons jutting from defenses. They were dubbed "Quaker guns" and "wooden ordnance."

The Confederates raised balloons a few times. But the South did not have adequate equipment for producing large amounts of hydrogen gas or rubber. The first Confederate balloon was made of varnish-covered cotton and was filled with hot air. An observer drew a map of Union positions near Yorktown, but had trouble controlling the balloon. The next Confederate bal-

loon was made of colorful swaths of silk (inspiring the legend that the balloon's fabric consisted of ball gowns donated by patriotic Southern belles). Filled at Richmond's municipal gas works, the balloon was teth-



Lowe replenishing the balloon "Intrepid" from the balloon "Constitution" at Fair Oaks, Virginia



Richmond map used by Lowe on June 14, 1862, prepared by John C. Babcock and "E.J. Allen" (Allan Pinkerton). Lowe's note at the bottom states "The red lines represent some of the most important earth works seen this morning and are located as near as possible, as is also the camps in black ink. As soon as I can get an observation from the Mechanicsville balloon, I can make many additions to this map."

ered to a locomotive, which took it to an observation site. The balloon later was moved by a tugboat and taken down the James River. The tug ran aground, and Union troops captured the balloon.

Both sides soon gave up the use of balloons: the South because of the lack of resources, and the North primarily because Lowe and his balloons could not find a bureaucratic niche in the U.S. Army. Lowe resigned in May 1863, and the U.S. Army Balloon Corps was disbanded soon after.

The telegraph, however, went to war and stayed in the war. The Union particularly saw the value of the telegraph and used it as the key component in what would be the first modern military communication system. Field telegraph units linked commands and were connected to hilltop signalers who sent messages by flags in daylight and by torches at night.



A signal tower at Elk Mountain

For most of the war, Union Army telegraphic messages were handled by the civilian-staffed U.S. Military Telegraph (USMT), which connected battlefields with far-flung generals and with the War Department in Washington. On a typical day, the USMT operators handled 4,500 telegrams, some more than 1,000 words long. During operations at Fort Monroe, on the Virginia peninsula, the terrestrial network even had an underwater branch that carried messages across Chesapeake Bay to a land connection at Wilmington,

Delaware. The underwater link was a recycled, 25-mile-long segment of the original Atlantic Cable, which had briefly connected America and Britain in 1858.

The Confederacy also used the telegraph for tactical communications in the field and for messages between Richmond and military commands. Like the Union telegraphers, Southerner operators usually encrypted messages. The Confederates' preferred encryption system was known as the Vigenere substitution cipher, named after Blaise de Vigenere, the 16th-century French diplomat who developed it. The encipherment depended upon the use of a keyword used to set up a matrix in which a letter acquired a different equivalent each time it was used in a message. Union codebreakers cracked the

code because Confederates usually employed only a few keywords and encrypted only important words.

For example, in a warning message sent to a general by President Jefferson Davis, the text read: "By this you may effect O—TPGGEXVK above that part—HJOPGK—WMCT—patrolled..." The Union cryptanalyst, beginning with guesses, deciphered the first jumble of word as a crossing and the second as the river (words were often encrypted without spaces between them). Knowing the basic Vigenere system, he then worked out the keyword as CompleteVictory, and with this, he could break subsequent messages until the keyword was changed. Keyword changes, however, did not guarantee message security; for by knowing that a keyword had to be 15 letters long, Union cryptanalysts had a solid clue when they tried to break a message. (Union cryptanalysts also helped to break up a Confederate counterfeiting ring based in New York City.)

The cipher system, which gave Confederate telegraph operators strings of letters combined with plaintext, impaired message transmission. The operators, who had no idea what they were sending, often made mistakes. They sometimes garbled messages so thoroughly that only fragments reached decrypting officers.



Union code book

Both sides learned to tap telegraph lines. Federal operators tapped General Albert Sidney Johnston's headquarters in Bowling Green, Kentucky and were undetected for a month when they tapped the Confederate line between Chattanooga and Knoxville. Most message intercepts, however, came not through taps, but via the capture of enemy telegraph stations. Once in control of a station, the captors could not only intercept messages, but also send false ones. Robert E. Lee found telegraphing so untrustworthy that he ordered his officers to "send no dispatches by telegraph relative to ... movements, or they will become known." Federal telegraphers scrambled words in prearranged patterns, making Union messages relatively secure. (The technique was known as a "routing code.")



U.S. Army signal flag

Much battlefield signaling involved flags and torches rather than telegraph operators. The wig-wag system, as it was known, was developed by a U.S. Army officer, Major Albert James Myer. While he was a medical officer in the 1850s, Myer used his knowledge of sign language to develop the wig-

wag's two-part numerical code. A motion of a flag or torch to the left indicated 1, to the right, 2. Each letter of the alphabet was represented by a combination of left and rights. As Myer pointed out in his manual, once a "signalist" learned the system, he could use "a handkerchief or hat held in the hand above the head...or any white or light cloth tied to a gun."

One of the young officers who had worked with Myer was Lieutenant Edward Porter Alexander. When the war began, Myer was still in the U.S. Army, and Alexander was about to become a captain in the Confederate Army. At Manassas in July 1861, Myer, attached to a balloon unit, did not have a chance to put his system in operation. But Alexander did, setting up a wig-wag station on a height still called Signal Hill. Alexander, who spotted the glint of an artillery piece and signaled a crucial Union maneuver, helped the Confederates win the battle -- thanks to Myer.

Because both North and South used essentially the same wig-wag system, the signal principles were mutually understood. By training powerful telescopes on rival signal stations, each side could intercept the other's messages and then try to decrypt them. Once, Confederate signal operators intercepted a message that read, "Send me a copy of Rebel Code immediately, if you have one in your possession." The Confederates quickly changed their codes. Intercepting and decrypting went on continually. During a campaign around Charleston, the Confederates had 76 signalists at work, twelve of them assigned to reading enemy traffic.

Myer developed a cipher disk, as did the Confederates. The disks were used for important messages. The transmitting station initiated the message by wig-wagging the

cipher combination that he would use. The receiving operator received the enciphered message, then deciphered it with the cipher device, which typically consisted of two concentric disks. Numbers on the outer disk indicated flag wags (2122, say, for right, left, right, right). These numbers aligned with letters on the inner ring.



Confederate cipher cylinder

The idea of signaling with flags inspired the sending of other visual messages. Reports of "clothesline" and "window-shade" codes made Confederate and Union officers suspicious of ordinary objects for their possible covert meanings. One documented clothesline code showed whether Confederate forces had withdrawn (empty clothesline) or were being reinforced (three pieces hung out).

In terms of espionage, the signal units of the two sides differed considerably. For the Union, signal intelligence was kept separate from the running of agents and other espionage activities. The Confederacy's Signal Corps had a clandestine unit, the Secret Service Bureau, whose missions included infiltration of agents into the North. Major William Norris, chief of the Signal Corps, ran the Secret Line, the underground link used by Confederate couriers and agents traveling between the North and South.

The dual nature of the Confederate Signal Bureau was demonstrated at least twice during the war. A Secret Line operative set up a window-shade signal station in a Washington building for communicating with an intelligence officer across the Potomac. The operative was captured, but insisted he was an officer in the Confederate Signal Corps. Held for a time on suspicion of spying, he was later released and returned to the South. In another incident, a Confederate Signal Corps officer was captured while attempting to set up a signal station behind Union lines. The officer "was taken in citizen's dress," a Union report noted, although "the rebels have a uniform for their signal corps." Records show that he was sent back to the Confederacy in an exchange of prisoners of war. So, as a signal officer, he did not meet the fate of a spy.

From Signman to Weatherman



Albert J. Myer's lifelong devotion to communications dated back to his youth when he was a telegraph operator in New York state. He graduated from Buffalo Medical College in 1851. His doctoral dissertation was entitled "A New Sign Language for Deaf Mutes," reflecting his interest in silent signaling.

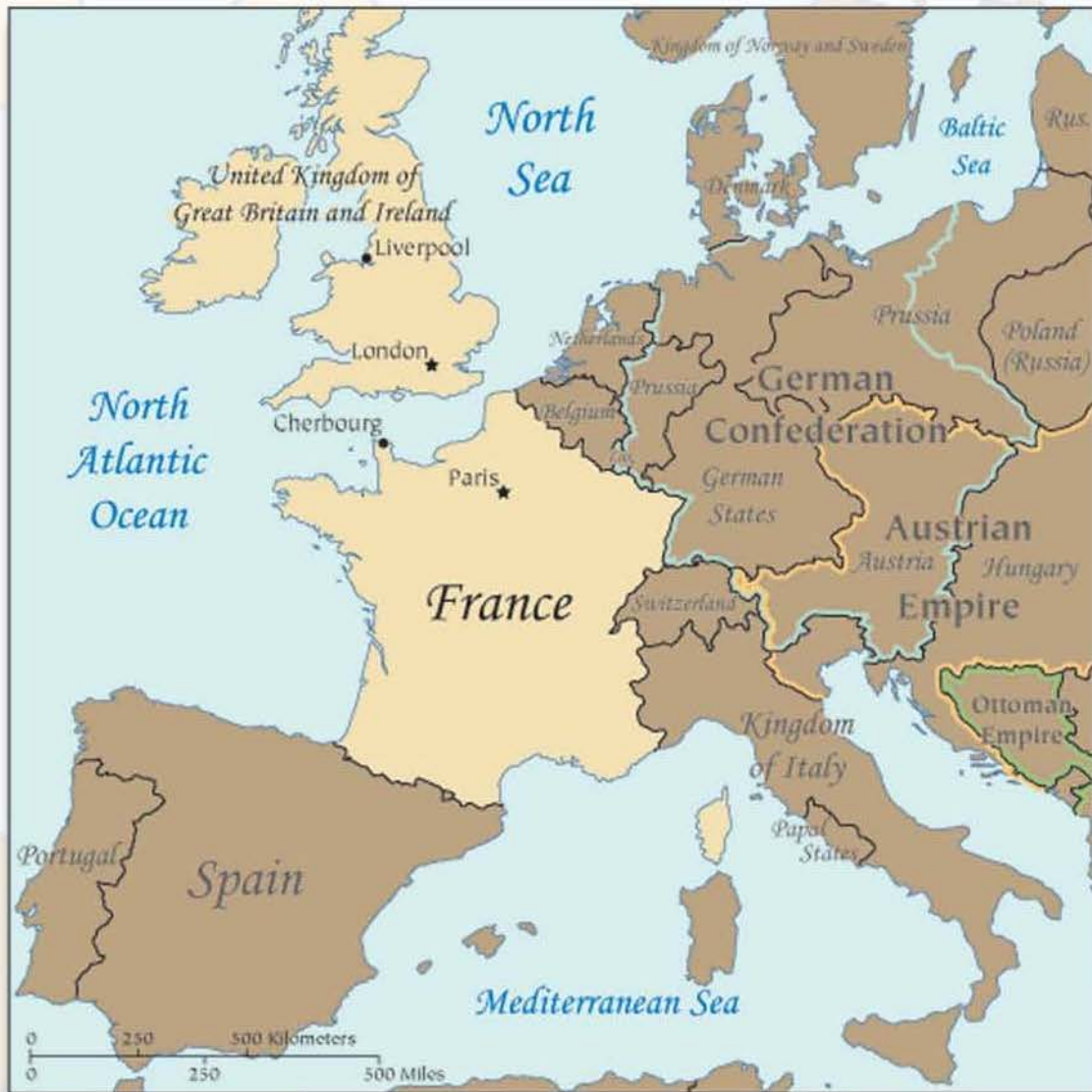
In 1854, he became an assistant surgeon in the Army and was sent west where federal troops were fighting Indians. Inspired by the sight of Indian smoke signals and hand communications, he developed a "wig-wag" communications system that used flags by day and torches by night. He was campaigning for the Army to adapt his system when the Civil War began.

Myer shifted from surgeon to signal officer, with the rank of major, and was promoted to colonel when the Signal Corps was created in 1863. He clashed with superiors over the administration of military telegraphy, which was not under his control. After eight months in the fledgling Signal Corps, he was assigned to the Military Division of the West Mississippi, where he served for the rest of the war.

When Congress reorganized the Signal Corps in 1866, Myer once more became chief signal officer. He was head of the Signal Corps from 1867 until his death in 1880. During his tenure as chief, he helped to create the U.S. Weather Bureau, which was placed within the Signal Corps. Under Myer as its first director, the Weather Bureau started issuing reports that used the word "forecast" for the first time. Myer became a permanent brigadier general just before his death. Fort Myer, across the Potomac from Washington, D.C., is named in his honor.

Albert J. Myer

North Intelligence Overseas



Intelligence Overseas

At the beginning of the war, when the Union announced a blockade of Southern ports, leaders of the Confederacy believed that the blockade could be broken by pressure from Britain and France. The plan was to withhold cotton from the textile mills of those nations, forcing them to aid the Confederacy by convincing the Union to lift the blockade. But the French and British textile mills had huge stockpiles of cotton and did not face an immediate shortage from the Southern embargo.

North and South turned to diplomacy to advance their interests. Slavery was abhorred in both France and Britain. Neither nation could openly support the Confederacy. But, strategically, both nations liked the idea of a United States weakened by a crack-up of the Union. And Britain especially did not side with the North because of the hostile policy of Secretary of State William H. Seward, who threatened to declare war on the British if they intervened.

The South wanted Britain and France to recognize the sovereignty of the Confederate States of America. Union diplomats hoped to keep Britain from recognizing or intervening in any way. More than diplomacy was involved. Confederate and Union agents in Britain and France were fighting a secret war over the South's clandestine operations aimed at buying arms and building warships.

The North's blockade of Southern ports had inspired the Confederacy's diplomatic efforts in London and Paris. Southern strategists realized that the Confederacy could not survive on whatever just happened to trickle into the South from swift ships whose bold captains slipped through the blockade. The South decided that to break the blockade, the Confederacy needed to build a navy that could attack the Union warships, sink Northern merchantmen, and protect friendly commercial ships running guns and other supplies to the South.

Lacking adequate shipyards, Confederate officials sent agents to Britain and France to arrange for the shipbuilding and the arms purchases. Covert operations were needed because British law prohibited the arming of pri-

vate ships in British yards.

In the fall of 1861, the Confederacy's Department of State launched the plan on a diplomatic level by naming

two representatives: former U.S. Senator James M. Mason of Virginia was to go to Britain and former Senator John Slidell of Louisiana to France. Officially, the two envoys were empowered to negotiate treaties with their respective countries. Their clandestine mission was the obtaining of warships and arms.

Mason and Slidell were put on a ship that got through the blockade at Charleston and sailed via Nassau to Havana. The two new diplomats had no notion of security. A Cuban newspaper published their itinerary. This bit of open-source intelligence was read in another Cuban port by Captain Charles Wilkes, the commanding officer of the U.S.S. *San Jacinto*.

Mason and Slidell sailed from Havana on board the *Trent*, a British mail packet. The *San Jacinto* lay in wait and stopped the *Trent* with a shot across her bow. After a tense standoff, Wilkes snatched Mason and Slidell off the *Trent*, put them aboard the *San Jacinto*, and triumphantly sailed to Boston, where the two envoys were imprisoned. Britain reacted violently, ordering 10,000 troops to Canada, ostensibly for its protection against the United States. The crisis ended when the Lincoln administration convinced the British that Wilkes had acted on his own. Mason and Slidell were soon on their way across the Atlantic again.

Mason, though aware of covert Confederate activity in England, restricted himself to diplomacy. Slidell, however, became involved in setting up illicit arms deals and hiring propaganda agents for a campaign to counteract European sentiments against slavery and the Confederacy. One agent found seven "writers on the daily London press" who were willing to accept what was discreetly called "partial employment." Besides the pay-offs, the journalists got Havana cigars and American whiskey. An agent in France had a \$25,000 "secret service fund" to be used to sponsor newspaper articles that "may be useful in enlightening public opinion."

The propaganda fund paid for the publishing of 125,000 copies of a pro-slavery tract by "the Clergy of the Confederate States of America." Some copies were

stitched into religious publications, one of which was strongly against slavery. Propaganda agents also produced placards showing the Confederate and British flags intertwined and placed them in “every available space in the streets of London.” Henry Hotze, a former U.S. Foreign Service officer, was an undercover Confederate operative who wrote pro-South articles for British newspapers and founded *Index, A Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature, and News*, which appeared to be a British publication. Hotze hired British journalists and syndicated their pro-Confederate articles to dozens of British and European publications—and to Northern newspapers. Hotze’s journal kept publishing until five months after the war ended.

Hotze mingled with key British politicians, including William Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer, who made pro-Confederacy speeches. Hotze also worked with other Confederate agents to stage a peace rally calling for the ending of the war on Southern terms.

The Confederate secret service, which ran the Secret Line courier service between Union territory and Richmond, extended the service to reach England and France. The courier service was set up by George N. Sanders, a former journalist and political operator with connections in the North, the South, and Europe. Union agents, aware of Sanders’ sympathies, kept eliminate him under surveillance. A surveillance report notes his landing in Liverpool “in a great hurry” and describes him as “a man of small stature with black whiskers under his chin” who “no doubt is a bearer of dispatches from the insurgents.”

Records of the Secret Service Fund refer to the extended Secret Line as the “Postal Route to Richmond.” The route ran from England to Halifax, Nova Scotia, and then to coastal pickup points on Chesapeake Bay, where Secret Line couriers were given the dispatches and got them to the Confederate capital. Agents in Europe used a special cipher for such correspondence.

The South had to invent a European intelligence presence. The North possessed a ready-made, though amateur, intelligence network in the form of U.S. ambassadors and consuls. Thomas Haines Dudley, the U.S. consul in Liverpool, ran the network in Britain. He had a natural talent for espionage. A Quaker, Dudley once dis-

guised himself as a slave trader in a scheme to purchase back fugitive slaves kidnapped in the North.

Working with Dudley were Henry Shelton Sanford, minister to Belgium, and Freeman Harlow Morse, U. S. consul in London. Sanford believed in sabotage and rigorous intelligence gathering. Sanford paid more attention to Confederates in Britain than to matters in Belgium. Like Dudley, Sanford engaged British detectives as agents and saw no reason not to gather information “through a pretty mistress or a spying landlord.” Sanford bribed factory clerks to tell him what Confederate purchasing agents were paying for ordered supplies. “I go on the doctrine that in war as in love everything is fair that will lead to success,” Sanford wrote.



Henry Shelton Sanford

Fearing that Sanford’s rash approach would produce another U.S.-British crisis, the Lincoln administration reined him in. In a message that praised him for his “active and intelligence services for detecting traitorous proceedings,” he was ordered to turn over those duties to Morse and go back to being just a minister to Belgium.

Morse hired a former detective of the London police, who set up surveillance posts in London and Liverpool and got daily reports from his detectives. Among other actions, they bribed postal workers to obtain the addresses on letters sent and received by Confederate agents. The Union detectives also managed to intercept Confederate telegrams.

The chief target of surveillance was James Dunwody Bulloch, a former U.S. Navy officer (and three-year-old Theodore Roosevelt’s uncle). Bulloch had launched the Confederate shipbuilding operation in June 1861 when he found a Liverpool shipyard whose owner agreed to build a ship to Bulloch’s specifications. As he later explained, “The contract was made with me as a private person, nothing whatever being said about the ultimate destination of the ship....” Bulloch named her the *Oreto* and sent her off to Nassau with a Confederate captain and crew.

The U.S. consul in Nassau, apparently tipped off by American agents in England, went into court to charge that the ship was a Confederate warship, in violation of British law. The court ruled that no law was broken because the *Oreto* was unarmed.

She then sailed to a coral isle some 75 miles south of Nassau. There she rendezvoused with an arms-filled ship dispatched by Bulloch. Quickly armed and renamed the *Florida*, she set sail. After a delay caused by an outbreak of yellow fever aboard, she headed for Mobile, Alabama. Because of a bungled installation, her guns could not fire when she initially encountered Union warships. She got away, though badly damaged. Once repaired, the *Florida* survived to ravage Union shipping. In the two years before she was captured, she seized or destroyed more than 30 American ships.

Dudley was determined to keep Bulloch's next ship from going to sea. The ship, known in the yard simply as "290," was nearly ready to sail in July 1862 when Bulloch's agents realized that Dudley had gathered enough intelligence to go to court with a legal claim against the shipyard for violating British neutrality laws.

Bulloch hastily arranged what appeared to be a leisurely sail down the River Mersey, complete with several women and men seemingly out for the day. Suddenly, a tugboat appeared alongside the ship, the passengers were disembarked, and the 290 became the cruiser *Alabama*, bound for the Azores, where she would take on guns, ammunition, and supplies.

Bulloch appeared to have outwitted Dudley. But Bulloch did not know that Dudley had planted an agent on the *Alabama*. The agent, paymaster Clarence Yonge, left the ship in Jamaica, returned to England, and added his knowledge to Dudley's legal case against the clandestine Confederate operations. In an affidavit, Yonge noted that the shipyard had equipped the supposedly commercial ship with sockets in her decks and other fixtures for guns, along with powder tins, and accommodations for a 100-man crew.

The *Alabama* was the Confederate's most successful raider. She captured or destroyed more than 60 ships with a total value of nearly \$6 million before a Union warship ended her career. While she was destroying the

U.S. commercial fleet, Dudley was using his evidence to deprive the Confederacy of two additional warships ordered by Bulloch. Dudley argued that the ships—two ironclads with metal underwater rams jutting from their hulls to rip holes in a foe's wooden hull—were obviously warships. And he warned that if British officials allowed them to go to sea, the decision would be considered an act of war against the United States.

Dudley was awaiting the British decision when he received a report from the U.S. consul in Cardiff, Wales: a French ship had arrived in Cardiff carrying men who carelessly talked about being crewmen for the rams, as the warships were called. The consul noted that the men boarded a train for Liverpool. Surveillance of the Liverpool shipyard showed that one of the ironclads was almost completed; a Frenchman, not Bulloch, claimed ownership. In October 1863, as a ram was about to sail, the British government seized both rams; the British government later bought them.

The State Department's intelligence work in Europe produced another coup in June 1864 when the U.S. minister to France learned that the *Alabama* was in Cherbourg for repairs. The minister passed the information in a telegram to the captain of the U.S.S. *Kearsarge*, which was in a Dutch port. The *Kearsarge* sailed to Cherbourg, stood off outside the territorial limit, and waited for the *Alabama*. In a two-hour battle watched by 15,000 spectators ashore and at sea, the guns of the *Kearsarge* sank the *Alabama*.

By then, there was little hope that either France or Britain would recognize the Confederacy. In February 1864, reporting to the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Bulloch had written, "The spies of the United States are numerous, active, and unscrupulous. They invade the privacy of families, tamper with the confidential clerks of merchants, and have succeeded in converting a portion of the police of this Kingdom into secret agents of the United States...." There was, he said, "no hope of getting the ships out."

Shipbuilder of the Confederacy

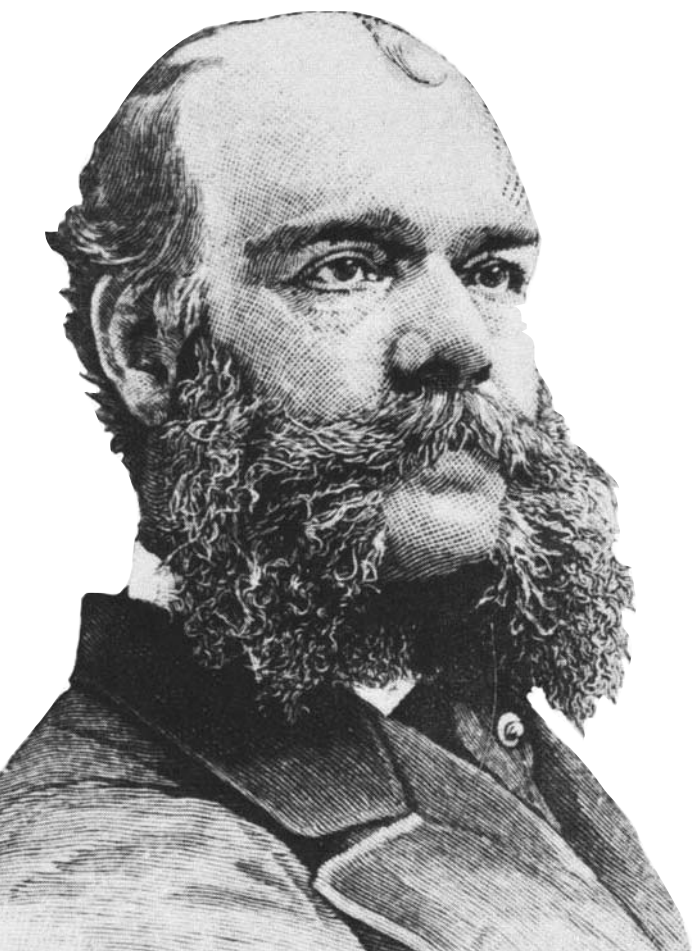
Georgia-born James Dunwody Bulloch was the eldest brother of Mittie Bulloch, Theodore Roosevelt's mother. Bulloch, who joined the U.S. Navy as a midshipman in 1839, rose only to the rank of lieutenant and quit after 14 years because no further promotion seemed likely. He became master of a coastal steamer carrying mail and passengers between New Orleans and New York.

When the Civil War began, Bulloch volunteered for service in the Confederacy and was sent to Liverpool to secretly arrange the building of blockade runners. He arrived in England on June 4, 1861. His first British contact was a Liverpool cotton merchant whose firm had a branch in Charleston, South Carolina. Within three days after his arrival, Bulloch negotiated a contract for building the first Confederate blockade cruiser. On paper, the ship was named the *Oreto* and was owned by a Liverpool agent of an Italian company.

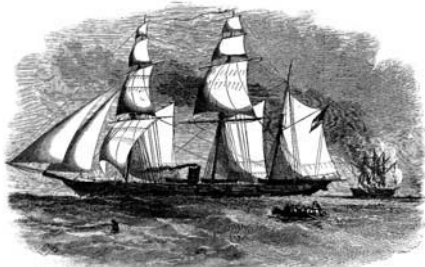
Another ship built during Bulloch's covert operation was the *Alabama*. His younger brother, Irving Bulloch, later served on the ship. Legend makes him the sailor who fired the last shot when the *Alabama* was sinking after her duel with the Union's *Kearsarge*. Irving later joined the crew of the raider *Shenandoah*, which circumnavigated the globe in search of Yankee prey.

After the war, Bulloch remained in Liverpool, where he lived with his daughter and son-in-law. He remained connected with maritime activities and became director of the Liverpool Nautical College. In 1883, he published his memoirs, "The Secret Service of the Confederate States in Europe" or "How the Confederate Cruisers Were Equipped." He lived to see his nephew become Vice President, but died in Liverpool in January 1901, eight months before Theodore Roosevelt became President following the assassination of President McKinley.

James Bulloch



Pride of the Confederate Navy

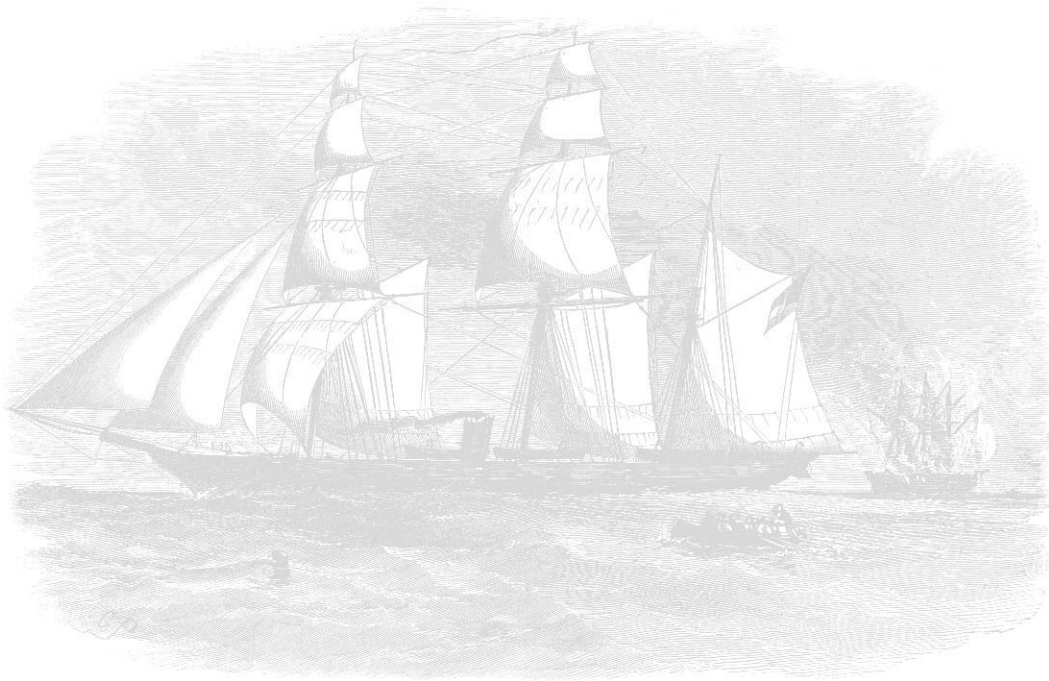


THE PRIDE "ALABAMA" CAPTURED BY AN ENEMY BY CAPTAIN SEMMES OF THE "HATTERAS" (See Page 41 and 42)
—THE HARPER WEEK

In August 1862, the Alabama left Liverpool, bound for war and fame under the command of Captain Raphael Semmes. She captured and burned U.S. ships in the North Atlantic and the West Indies, then sailed for the Texas coast, where she continued her voyage of destruction. Her most famous feat was the sinking

of the U.S.S. Hatteras, a steel-hulled, side-wheeled warship. After a stop in Cape Town, South Africa, the Alabama spent six months in the East Indies chasing and sinking U.S. ships. She destroyed seven more ships before going around the Cape again on a voyage to Cherbourg, France, for overhaul.

In her final duel, on June 19, 1864, the U.S.S. Kearsarge sank the Alabama. A British yachtsman picked up Semmes and 41 others and took them to England. Semmes soon returned to Virginia, where he commanded the James River Squadron and, after the fall of Richmond, rallied his sailors as infantrymen and fought on.



The Alabama

Conspiracy in Canada

Dec. 17, 1964.]

FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER.

203

Dix, and made himself accommodating, that he not only acted as a waiter and a barman, but also as a messenger or two more judiciously thrown in, promoted the likelihood of their being successful in their mission, which he had taken for these months certain, that every evening.

He arrived about eight o'clock, having given out to his friends and a few others, and was going to leave town. Just as he had jumped out of the cab and he was paying the man, he glanced up at the next question. One of the top windows was open, and he saw the young conspirator of the night looking steadily down at him. Their eyes met, and he saw that the man had recognized him, the child to come one in the room, and a stern-voiced old woman came to the door.

REBEL PLOT TO BURN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

Attempt to Destroy \$15,000,000 Worth of Hotel Property.

The most diabolical attempt at arson and murder of which there is any record in the history of our country was made in this city on the night of Friday, the 25th of November. By whom it was made has not yet been settled beyond question; but there is no doubt that the nefarious scheme originated with Southern rebels, who have gained access to our city from the shelter of neutral Canada. Several persons, suspected as perpetrators of this outrage, have been apprehended, and the property sequestered measures adopted by Gen. Dix will, we doubt not, bring the guilty to punishment, and preserve us henceforth from any similar danger.

There was so much similarity in all the incendiary attempts of the 25th of November, that it would be monotonous and tedious to relate them at length. While we must admit the malignity of the intention, we cannot commend its ingenuity. The failure was at once conspicuous and complete. With one solitary exception, every Guy Fawkes of this memorable band of conspirators had a small black leather rule. The exception to this black leather rule was the Mr. Simpson who set fire to room 302 of the Metropolitan Hotel. He had a russet portmanteau, and his attempt was one of the most deliberate, he having secreted a bottle of phosphorus under the mattress, another in the bureau, and a third in his portmanteau. Next to the St. Nicholas, the Metropolitan was the most injured, the damage amounting to over \$1,000. The conspirator, who disappeared about an hour before the fire was discovered, had taken his room three days before the attempt.

TOWN GOSSIP.

The great event of the week, the burning of the city, has been the nearest home to New York of the city.

It seems wonderful that we who sleep in such quiet and seclusion, a quiet and seclusion that can only be found in a great city, should be disturbed with plots, murder and arson, and yet, at this present writing, it seems wonderfully like it.

New York city, which feels the war afar off, and has never yet realized the real strength of it, and cannot easily see anything that comes before it, was aroused on Friday night with the ringing of bells and the hurrying of men from a score of points to answer the cry of "fire!"

The alarm proved to proceed from almost every hotel in the city, and fire in its direct form was the cause. Simultaneously the flames broke forth from almost every leading hotel and from Barnum's Museum, and for the moment all was terror and confusion. In a few hours all was quiet, and a few smoldering and smoking rooms only testified to the strength of the attempt. The investigations of the police brought something to light, and that something was absolute evidence of a preconcerted plot to burn the city, proved by the finding, in a dozen different hotels, of sundry bottles that had contained phosphorus, turpentine and other inflammables, as well as sundry letters, left by the incendiaries in the rooms they had occupied.

For the setting of hundreds of innocent lives, as well as the saving of great wealth, we have to be thankful that this horrible plot did not succeed; but for the good it is likely to do in arousing the people from the false security in which they are dwelling we have to be equally thankful.

Here, so far as we can see, is a band of 20 or 30 men, apparently organized, and fairly starting on an expedition for murder and plunder into the very heart of one of the greatest cities of the world. What the good motive could have been in it is not clear; but it is possible only will be known on the last reckoning day, but

REBEL PLOT TO BURN THE CITY OF NEW YORK.

Attempt to Destroy \$15,000,000 Worth of Hotel Property.

The most diabolical attempt at arson and murder of which there is any record in the history of our country was made in this city on the night of Friday, the 25th of November. By whom it was made has not yet been settled beyond question; but there is no doubt that the nefarious scheme originated with Southern rebels, who have gained access to our city from the shelter of neutral Canada. Several persons, suspected as perpetrators of this outrage, have been apprehended, and the property sequestered measures adopted by Gen. Dix will, we doubt not, bring the guilty to punishment, and preserve us henceforth from any similar danger.

There was so much similarity in all the incendiary attempts of the 25th of November, that it would be monotonous and tedious to relate them at length. While we must admit the malignity of the intention, we cannot commend its ingenuity. The failure was at once conspicuous and complete. With one solitary exception, every Guy Fawkes of this memorable band of conspirators had a small black leather rule. The exception to this black leather rule was the Mr. Simpson who set fire to room 302 of the Metropolitan Hotel. He had a russet portmanteau, and his attempt was one of the most deliberate, he having secreted a bottle of phosphorus under the mattress, another in the bureau, and a third in his portmanteau. Next to the St. Nicholas, the Metropolitan was the most injured, the damage amounting to over \$1,000. The conspirator, who disappeared about an hour before the fire was discovered, had taken his room three days before the attempt.

The attempt to burn the Metropolitan Hotel was the most successful of the attempts. The fire started in room 302, and spread rapidly to the other rooms. The damage was estimated at \$15,000,000. The fire was extinguished by the fire department, but the damage was done.

The attempt to burn the St. Nicholas Hotel was also successful. The fire started in room 101, and spread rapidly to the other rooms. The damage was estimated at \$10,000,000. The fire was extinguished by the fire department, but the damage was done.

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Courtesy of Harpweek, LLC

Conspiracy in Canada

In secret sessions during February 1864, the Confederate Congress passed a bill that authorized a campaign of sabotage against “the enemy’s property, by land or sea.” The bill established a Secret Service fund—\$5 million in U.S. dollars—to finance the sabotage. As an incentive, saboteurs would get rewards proportional to the destruction they wreaked. One million dollars of that fund was specifically earmarked for use by agents in Canada. For some time, agents there had been plotting far more than across-the-border sabotage. They believed that their plans for large-scale covert actions could win the war.

Canada, then officially known as British North America, was against slavery, but not fully supportive of the North. As a British possession, Canada reflected Britain’s brand of neutrality, which tipped toward the South and King Cotton. Many Canadians worried about the possibility that the breakup of the Union might tempt the United States to add territory by attempting to annex Canada. As the war wore on and Canadians’ sympathy for the South grew, so did toleration for harboring Confederate agents.

The Canadian operations station was in Toronto under the military command of Captain Thomas Henry Hines, who had ridden with Morgan’s Raiders in guerrilla sorties into Kentucky and Tennessee. On the raids, Hines had made contact with leaders of pro-South underground networks in what was then called the “Northwest”—part of today’s Midwest.



Confederate operations against the Union from Canada

Hines’s orders from the Confederate War Department said he was “detailed for special service” in Canada and was empowered to carry out “any hostile operation” that did not violate Canadian neutrality. As Hines saw his mission, which became known to foes as the Northwest

Conspiracy, he was “creating a Revolution.” By raising an insurrection in the Northwest states, he believed that he would turn them against the Union and bring an end to the war on Southern terms.

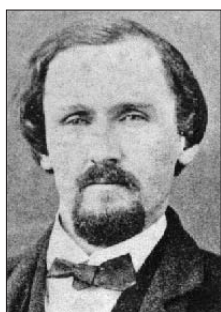
The conspirators especially recruited sympathizers from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, where an estimated 40 percent of the population was Southern-born. Many belonged to secret societies, such as the Knights of the Golden Circle or the Order of the Sons of Liberty, which were anti-Union and anti-abolition. Members wore on their lapels the head of Liberty, cut from copper pennies. Their enemies called them Copperheads for the poisonous snake that struck without warning.

Among the conspirators were military officers in civilian clothes and politicians, such as Jacob Thompson who had been Secretary of the Interior under President James Buchanan and Clement Clay, former U.S. Senator from Alabama. They were ostensibly “commissioners” sent to Canada with vaguely defined public roles as their cover. Other politicians involved in plots were George N. Sanders, who had taken part in Confederate operations in Europe, and Clement L. Vallandigham, who had been a powerful member of Congress from Ohio. He claimed he had 300,000 Sons of Liberty ready to follow him in an insurrection that would produce a Northwest Confederacy.

Hines reported to the civilians, especially Thompson. But there was a shadowy connection between Hines and the Secret Service Bureau of the Confederate Signal Corps. One clue to this connection is a Signal Corps order that Hines be instructed in the use of Confederate ciphers.

Much of the Canada-Richmond communication system relied on couriers, and one of them was a double agent. Richard Montgomery, as a Confederate agent, carried dispatches from Confederate President Jefferson Davis to the Canadian station. As a Union agent, he stopped off in Washington, where the dispatches, which were usually in cipher, were copied and decrypted. To strengthen Davis’ faith in Montgomery, Assistant Secretary of War Charles Dana even had him captured and imprisoned. In his staged escape, Montgomery claimed he shot himself in the arm so he could have proof of his desperate flight.

Not far from the Canadian border were two large Union prisoner of war camps—on Johnson’s Island, near Sandusky, Ohio in Lake Erie, and at Fort Douglas in Chicago. To enlist soldiers for the insurrection, the conspirators came up with an elaborate plan: agents would slip out of Canada, take over Lake Erie river steamers, and use them as impromptu warships for the boarding and seizure of the U.S.S. Michigan, which guarded the lake for the Union. The Confederates would then attack Johnson’s Island, free the thousands of prisoners there, and arm them. In coordinated raids, prisoners at Fort Douglas would also be freed and armed. The Confederate soldiers, allied with the Sons of Liberty, would then take over the region, forcing the North to sue for peace.



John Yates Beall

On September 19, 1864, John Yates Beall, a veteran blockade runner, and about 20 men boarded the Philo Parsons, a small Detroit-Sandusky steamer, in Detroit as ordinary passengers. At Beall’s request, the captain made an unscheduled stop at Amherstburg on the Canadian side of the Detroit River, and several more of Beall’s men boarded, toting a large trunk filled with grappling hooks for seizing the Michigan.

As the Philo Parsons neared Johnson’s Island, Beall put a pistol to the helmsman’s head and took over the ship. The Confederate flag was hoisted, and the real passengers and most of the crew were put ashore on another island. Then Beall sailed the steamer to a point off Johnson’s Island and awaited a signal from the Michigan.

A genial Philadelphia banker—and a new friend of the captain of the Michigan—was supposed to signal Beall that all was clear for the attack. However, the supposed banker, who was really Captain Charles H. Cole of the Confederate Army, had been arrested by Union soldiers. Cole, Confederates later said, had been betrayed. Union records show that Cole, captured on a tip from a Confederate captive and held aboard the Michigan, “disclosed the whole plot” in time for the Union warship to prepare for battle.

Seeing no signal and fearing that the Michigan had been alerted, Beall’s crew, murmuring mutiny, demanded that he abort the attack. He set course for Canada, landed everyone ashore, and then burned the Philo Parsons.

A month after the Michigan fiasco, about 20 Confederate agents in civilian clothes entered St. Albans, Vermont, 15 miles south of the Canadian border. The plan was to burn down the village in a “retribution” raid, retaliating for Union rampages in the South. The raiders robbed three banks of about \$200,000, but managed to set fire only to a woodshed. They recrossed the border on stolen horses, killing a pursuer.

Montgomery, the double agent, had passed to Washington a dispatch that mentioned a military operation in Vermont without naming St. Albans. Canadian authorities tracked down and arrested 14 of the raiders, but did not turn them over to U.S. authorities. They were eventually freed through the efforts of George Sanders.

Another mission, twice postponed, was soon to begin. Colonel Benjamin J. Sweet, commander of the POW camp at Fort Douglas, knew it was coming. In a dispatch to his commanding officer, he reported that Chicago “is filling up with suspicious characters, some of whom we know to be escaped prisoners, and others who were here from Canada....” Sweet sent the dispatch by messenger because he feared the conspirators might intercept telegrams.

Sweet had only 800 men to guard about 9,000 prisoners. They were restless because they, like Sweet, had heard the wild rumors of insurrection, prison-camp breakouts, and an invasion of Chicago. Sweet tracked the rumors and, from a planted agent, learned the identities and plans of the Confederate officers who had slipped into Chicago.

As he described the plot, the infiltrators planned to strike on November 8. They “intended to make a night attack on and surprise this camp, release and arm the prisoners of war, cut the telegraph wires, burn the railroad depots, seize the banks and stores containing arms and ammunition, take possession of the city, and commence a campaign for the release of other prisoners of war in the States of Illinois and Indiana, thus organizing an army to effect and give success to the general uprising so long contemplated by the Sons of Liberty.”

Sweet struck first on the night of November 7. With the aid of Union Army agents, Sweet arrested the raid's leaders and Sons of Liberty officers, along with "106 bushwhackers, guerrillas, and rebel soldiers." Cached in a collaborator's home near the camp were 142 shotguns and 349 revolvers, along with thousands of rounds of ammunition. Sweet reinforced the military guard in the city by mobilizing a force of 250 militiamen—and arming them with the raiders' confiscated guns.

Undeterred by the failure in Chicago, Commissioners Thompson and Clay authorized the boldest operation yet: the torching of New York City by eight agents. The agents were to set the fires with containers of "Greek fire," the general name, dating to antiquity, for incendiary substances. The 1864 version of Greek fire was developed for the Confederacy by a Cincinnati chemist who mixed phosphorous with carbon bisulphide. Exposed to air, the mixture bursts into flames.

In New York, the leader of the saboteurs went to a certain basement where an old man with a beard handed him a valise containing twelve dozen sealed, four-ounce bottles. Each man checked into a series of hotels, then went back to each one, opened a bottle in the room, left, and locked the door. They set fires in 19 hotels, a theater, and P.T. Barnum's American Museum. The fires did not amount to much. There was no panic. There was no uprising.

The last known Canadian sabotage operation came in December 1864. John Beall, who had failed to seize the Michigan, vainly tried three times to derail Union trains as they passed near Buffalo. Some of these trains carried Confederate prisoners. As he was heading back to Canada after the third attempt, he was arrested. Tried and convicted as a spy and a guerrilla, Beall was hanged on February 24, 1865.

A month later, Robert Cobb Kennedy met the same fate. He had been caught trying to get from Canada to Richmond. He blurted out a confession that doomed him as one of the New York terrorists. "I know that I am to be hung for setting fire to Barnum's Museum," he said, "but that was only a joke."

The next arrest of a Canadian conspirator came in May 1865. Luke Pryor Blackburn, a Kentucky doctor

attached to the Confederate sabotage group, was arrested in Canada on charges of conspiracy to murder in a foreign country. The charge had originated with an alert U.S. consul in Bermuda. Blackburn had been in Bermuda caring for victims of a yellow-fever epidemic. The consul learned that Blackburn had secretly collected victims' sweat-soaked clothing and blankets and shipped them to Canada.

At Blackburn's Canadian trial, an accomplice-turned-informant testified that Blackburn believed that yellow fever could be transmitted by the victims' clothing. (It was not yet known that the disease was spread by the bites of *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes.) On Blackburn's instructions, the accomplice picked up trunks in Halifax and shipped them to Northern cities in a plot to start a yellow-fever epidemic. A special valise was to be presented to President Lincoln. Secreted among the gift of dress shirts were rags of fever victims' clothing.

Blackburn was soon acquitted for lack of evidence, but few noticed. The war was over, and Lincoln was already dead—assassinated by a man who had met with the Canadian conspirators, John Wilkes Booth.

Booth had been in Canada in October 1864, but little is known about his visit with conspirators there. Richard Montgomery, the double agent in Canada, claimed that Booth and others had met to plot the kidnapping of President Lincoln. (The ransom was to be the freeing of Confederate prisoners of war, who could then fight again and perhaps win the war.) The kidnappers were to strike in March 1865, but an unexpected change in Lincoln's schedule thwarted them. When General Lee surrendered to General Grant on April 9, 1865, the plot dissolved. But five days later, Booth transformed himself from kidnapper to assassin and killed Lincoln.

Lafayette Baker, head of the National Detective Police, responded to a summons from Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton: "Come here immediately and see if you can find the murderer of the President." On April 26, Baker found Booth, but failed to take him alive. The assassin was fatally shot when he refused to come out of a barn that his pursuers had set afire.

Death of a Raider

John Yates Beall, born in Jefferson County, Virginia, in 1835, attended the University of Virginia and studied to become a lawyer. When the war began, he enlisted in the Stonewall Brigade, led by Colonel Thomas J. ("Stonewall") Jackson. He was severely wounded during a skirmish during the Shenandoah campaign of 1862. He returned to battle for a short time, but he was still too weak for battle and was given a medical discharge.

Beall made his way to Canada, where he briefly discussed covert plans with Confederate agents there. He next appeared in the Chesapeake Bay, leading two small vessels on raids against Union supply ships. He and his guerrilla band also cut a Union telegraph cable, blew up a lighthouse, and captured several ships. One of them was a ship carrying supplies to a Union force at Port Royal, South Carolina. Beall put a prize crew aboard and had the ship sail to Richmond. "I do not know that we ever accomplished any great things," he later wrote, "but we deviled the life out of the Gun boats of the Chesapeake trying to catch us."

In November 1863, he and his comrades were arrested for piracy and imprisoned for several months. In May 1864, he was sent to Richmond in a prisoner exchange. He slipped into Canada again and worked on his plan to capture the U.S.S. Michigan and free Confederate prisoners of war.

After his capture at Niagara Falls, he was taken to a New York City police station. While in the station, he tried to bribe a police officer with \$3,000 in gold to help him escape. He was unsuccessful. Beall was transferred to Fort Lafayette, a prison on a bleak rocky island at the mouth of upper New York Bay. (Today, the island supports

the east tower of the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge.) On February 10, 1865, a court martial convened to try Beall on two charges: violating the law of war by capturing a civilian ship and acting as a spy. He insisted that he had honorably worked under the orders of President Jefferson Davis and authorized agents of the Confederate government. The court ignored his defense, found him guilty, and sentenced him to death.

On February 21, Beall wrote a desperate letter to the Confederate commissioner in charge of prisoner exchange. "I acted under orders," he wrote, insisting that he was not a spy and deserved to be treated as a prisoner of war.

The commissioner received the letter on February 27. Three days before, Beall had been hanged. On the gallows, he said, "I protest against the execution of the sentence. It is absolute murder, brutal murder. I die in the defense and service of my country."



John Beall

Epilogue

The **Bureau of Military Information**, the U.S. Army's first modern military intelligence organization, was disbanded at the end of the war. In the 1880s, the first permanent U.S. intelligence organizations were formed: the Office of Naval Intelligence and the Army's Military Intelligence Division. Both services posted attachés in several major European cities, primarily for the gathering of open-source material. But when the Spanish-American War began in 1898, some attachés ran espionage operations.

When the Army was fighting insurgents in the Philippines after the Spanish-American War, Captain Ralph Henry Van Deman took charge of the Bureau of Insurgent Records and started running undercover agents. Counterintelligence had returned to the U.S. Army. Van Deman, an advocate of intelligence and counterintelligence, lobbied for his specialties throughout his career, which ended with his retirement in 1929.

In 1903, when the U.S. Army created a general staff modeled on those of European armies, the Military Information Division (MID) was, for the first time, put on the same staff level as operations and logistics. In World War I, the MID became an important component of the American Expeditionary Force. MID officers recruited 50 French-speaking sergeants who had police training. This corps of intelligence police eventually evolved into the Counter Intelligence Corps.

By the end of the war, the Military Intelligence Division had 282 officers and 1,159 civilians, including the secret MI-8 section, devoted to cryptology under Herbert O. Yardley. This time, when a war ended, military intelligence did not end with it. The MID lived on through the interwar years, expanded during World War II, and evolved into the Army's Intelligence and Security Command (INSCOM).

As for what happened to some of the people who had been involved in intelligence during the Civil War:

Lafayette Baker, who had led the search for John Wilkes Booth and his conspirators, was fired by President Andrew Johnson. Baker had assigned agents to spy on Johnson, supposedly under orders from Johnson's foe, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton.

Luke Pryor Blackburn, the Confederate doctor who conceived of the yellow-fever plot, returned to Kentucky, where he worked tirelessly during a yellow-fever epidemic in 1878. His good deeds helped to get him elected governor of Kentucky. On his tombstone is "Luke Pryor Blackburn—the Good Samaritan."

Details of the spy career of Elizabeth Van Lew's maid, **Mary Elizabeth Bowser**, are still debated. But there was enough faith in stories of her spying in Jefferson Davis's residence to have her inducted into the U.S. Army Intelligence Hall of Fame at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, in 1995.

Belle Boyd, after two stints in Union prison, went to Europe to recover from typhoid. In May 1864, she headed for America on a blockade runner that was captured by a U.S. Navy warship. She fell in love with an officer on the warship and married him in England. Her husband, dismissed from the Navy, later was arrested in the United States and died soon after being released. Belle launched a theatrical career both in England and America. She died in 1900 while on a speaking tour in Wisconsin.

Grenville Dodge became chief engineer of the Union Pacific Railroad and was in charge of building the portion of the transcontinental railroad from Council Bluffs to Utah.

After being freed from a Union prison, **Rose O'Neal Greenhow** joined Confederate propaganda agents in England and France and wrote a book about her work as a spy. In 1864, she sailed to America onboard a Confederate blockade-runner, which ran aground at the mouth of Cape Fear River, near

Wilmington, North Carolina. She left the ship in a lifeboat and was drowned when the boat swamped. She was buried in Wilmington with military honors.

After the war, **Thomas Henry Hines**, a member of the Northwest Conspiracy, signed an oath of allegiance to gain amnesty, returned to the United States, and practiced law in Bowling Green, Kentucky. He became the chief justice of the Kentucky Court of Appeals.

William A. Lloyd, Abraham Lincoln's contracted spy, probably would have remained unknown if it were not for an unusual court case. After Lloyd's death, the administrator of his estate, noting that Lloyd's contract had been lost, sued the United States government for unpaid salary. In 1875, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the salary claim, saying, "Both employer and agent must have understood that the lips of the other were to be forever sealed respecting the relation of either to the matter." The court compared the secret relationship between agent and his superior to that between husband and wife, client and lawyer, patient and physician—and "the confidences of the confessional."

Balloonist **Thaddeus S. C. Lowe** moved to California after the war and built a home that included a tower and a telescope. His enthusiasm for astronomy led to another project: the building of the world-famous Lowe Observatory in Pasadena, California.

Charles Pomeroy Stone, whose gathering of intelligence helped to protect President-elect Lincoln, was promoted to brigadier general and led troops in a minor battle in October 1861 at Ball's Bluff, Virginia, 35 miles from Washington. Panicking in confused fighting, many Union troops were drowned. The Congressional Committee on the Conduct of the War blamed Stone for the tragedy and had him arrested. He was held without charges for more than six months. After the war, Stone served as chief of staff in the Egyptian army for 13 years. Later, while working as an engineer, he helped to build the foundation of the Statue of Liberty. He died in 1887 and was buried at West Point.

Postscript: Then and Now, the Guard Posts at Langley



*Guard House near Langley,
courtesy of Harpweek, LLC*

On a wall of the CIA's Visitor Control Center at the Agency's main entrance, there is an enlarged drawing that appeared in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper during the Civil War. The drawing shows a small wooden building identified as "Guard House Near Langley"—a reminder that Langley, now known as

McLean and the location of CIA Headquarters, once was known as the location of a Union Army outpost.

During the winter of 1861-1862, troops of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th Vermont Infantry regiments were stationed at Camp Griffin, which encompassed much of what is now eastern McLean, including part of what would become the Agency's Headquarters compound.

At the beginning of the war, in a move to protect Washington, Federal troops had seized Virginia land across the Potomac from the capital. Later, the army set up Camp Griffin there. The encampment lasted for about six months and was replaced by Fort Marcy, one of 48 forts built around Washington.

The Vermont troops were among the 70,000 Union soldiers who assembled at Bailey's Crossroads on November 20, 1861 for a grand review. "As far as the eye could reach there was nothing but lines of bayonets and uniformed men," one of the Vermonters wrote in his journal. The troops passed in review before President Lincoln, Major General George B. McClellan, and guests who included Julia Ward Howe.

When Mrs. Howe headed back to Washington, troops returning from the review passed by her coach, singing marching songs that included "John Brown's Body." A fellow passenger suggested to Mrs. Howe that she might consider writing better lyrics for the stirring melody. She

awoke before dawn the next day in her room at the Willard Hotel and wrote the words of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." On her journey back from the grand review, she had seen the "watch-fires of a hundred circling camps," and some of those fires were flickering on what are now the grounds of the CIA Headquarters.

Men of the Vermont regiments were assigned picket duty between the camp and the Potomac River—"standing," as one wrote, "on the outer verge of all that is left of the American Union." They eventually broke camp to fight at Antietam, Gettysburg and in the Battle of the Wilderness. They also served in the Shenandoah Valley, where on October 19, 1864, they helped to win the Battle of Cedar Creek, near Middletown, Virginia.

In 1992, the Agency commemorated the anniversary of the battle with a ceremony at Headquarters. "We feel a strong tie to the soldiers of Cedar Creek," said Robert M. Gates, Director of Central Intelligence. "There is a key lesson to be learned" from the battle, he said: "intelligence is decisive, not only in preparing for war, but in defending the peace." He noted that Confederate Major General John Gordon had personally gathered intelligence as he stood at the summit of Massanutten Mountain and observed the Union troops gathering in the valley below. "He pinpointed the location of Union trenches and artillery positions," Gates said. "he saw the weakness in the Union's left flank. And he observed that Union guards—so necessary for advanced warning—were not deployed around the fringe of the Union camp."

Armed with this intelligence, Gordon launched a surprise attack on the morning of October 19, routing the Union troops. In the afternoon, Union forces regrouped under Major General Philip Sheridan and defeated the Confederates—who withdrew—ending the South's control of the Shenandoah Valley.

Suggested Readings

Catherine Clinton, *Harriet Tubman*. (Boston: Little, Brown, 2004).

Virginius Dabney, *Richmond: The Story of a City*. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976).

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Philip S. Foner, *History of Black Americans from the Compromise of 1850 to the End of the Civil War*. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983).

Ervin L. Jordan, Jr., *Black Confederates and Afro-Yankees in Civil War Virginia*. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1995).

Jay Luvaas, "The Role of Intelligence in the Chancellorsville Campaign, April-May, 1863," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 5, No. 2, April 1990.

Donald E. Markle, *Spies and Spymasters of the Civil War*. (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1994).

Peter Maslowski, "Military Intelligence Sources During the American Civil War: A Case Study," "The Intelligence Revolution: A Historical Perspective," Proceedings of the Thirteenth Military History Symposium, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado, October 12-14, 1988., edited by Lt. Col. Walter T. Hitchcock, USAF., Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force.

James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

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Frank Morn, *The Eye That Never Sleeps: A History of the Pinkerton National Detective Agency*. (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1982).

G. J. A. O'Toole, *Honorable Treachery: A History of U.S. Intelligence, Espionage, and Covert Action*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991).

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Ishbel Ross, *Rebel Rose: Life of Rose O'Neal Greenhow, Confederate Spy*. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954).

Meriwether Stuart, "Operation Sanders," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, April 1973, Vol. 81, No. 2, pp. 157-158.

William A. Tidwell with James O. Hall and David Winfred Gaddy, *Come Retribution*. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000).

Elizabeth R. Varon, *Southern Lady, Yankee Spy*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

NOTE: A Manual of Signals: For The Use Of Signal Officers In The Field, written by Albert Myer in 1864, can be seen on the Signal Corps Association Reenactors' Division website
<http://69.3.157.98/SCARD/signalmanual/>